

The Victoria and Albert Museum Photography Curators' Training Programme

Supported by the



JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title:	Assistant Curator: Photographs (Trainee)
Division:	Collections
Department:	Word & Image
Salary:	£21,000
Contract:	Fixed term, 2 November 2015-31 October 2016 (full-time)
Reporting to:	Curator: Photographs

Background

With the support from the Art Fund, the Victoria and Albert Museum is running a two-year pilot programme to help support the development of curatorial expertise in art photography, working with regional museum partners.

In 2015-16, the V&A, in conjunction with Museums Sheffield, will create a curatorial trainee post to provide practical training in photographs curatorship and equip a Curator with specialist knowledge of photography and the ability to care for and develop photograph collections. It will provide an unparalleled practical training opportunity in photographs curatorship in the UK to build expertise in the field.

The post

The post will last for a period of 12 months. The participant will spend six months (November 2015 to April 2016) in the Photographs Section of the Word and Image Department at the V&A with a V&A Curator as mentor. This will be followed by a six months placement (May to October 2016) at Museums Sheffield working on an agreed project. The post-holder will report to the Curator, Photographs at the V&A.

V&A Photographs Section

Photographs is one of the Sections that make up Word & Image (WID) Collections. It is a small and dynamic team with a high profile within the Museum because of the significance of the collection, photography's importance

with audience appeal, and the Museum's commitment to photography as a key area. The Section maintains and develops the world-renowned national collection of the art of photography, runs displays in the Photographs Gallery, contributes to the V&A's public programme through preparation of and support of temporary and touring exhibitions, and participates in WID core activities, in particular the Prints and Drawings Study Room.

Museums Sheffield

Museums Sheffield's holdings of visual art reflect over 125 years of passionate collecting and connoisseurship. The collection comprises predominantly British and European Art from the 16th century to the present day and numbers over 6000 items including paintings, sculpture and works on paper. The foundations of the collection lie in the bequests of two key patrons, Sheffield businessmen John Newton Mappin (1800-1883) and John George Graves (1866-1945) who both believed that Sheffield was worthy of a nationally significant art collection and donated a large portion of their own collections to the city. After the opening of the Graves Gallery in 1934, the collection began to be developed in a more considered way and through the discernment and foresight of John Rotherstein and subsequent Directors, the important collection of Modern British Art began to take shape.

Sheffield's photography collection, developed between 1960 and 1980, consists of around 400 items. The majority of photographs are 20th century, including artists such as Bill Brandt, and Humphrey Spender. There is a strong group of works by Black British artists featuring works by David A Bailey, Vanley Burke and Armet Francis. A strong theme of identity runs through the collection, from portraits by photographers such as Man Ray and Cecil Beaton to the documentary images of Walker Evans and Fay Godwin.

Main tasks at the V&A

Collections

1. Ensure the care of the collections.
2. Assist in planning and implementation of displays in the photographs gallery and other V&A galleries.
3. Support preparations for the programme of UK and international touring photography exhibitions.
4. Assist with the preparation of publications.
5. Develop expertise and forge links with Museum and external colleagues working in related areas.
6. Work with colleagues in Learning and Interpretation on Museum educational initiatives.
7. Work with the Development Office on activities for the Photographs Acquisition Group.
8. Support and assist the work of the Curator and Senior Curator, Photographs.

Access

1. Respond to public, official and professional enquiries.
2. Assist in providing public opinions service for photographs.
3. Contribute to the Photography Section web pages.
4. Contribute to the development of photography resources for Prints and Drawings Study Room.

Central Services

1. Ensure the processing and cataloguing of newly-acquired objects.
2. Ensure location control for photographs records on the Museum's inventory and cataloguing Collections Management System (CMS).
3. Create catalogue records of the highest standard. Work with colleagues on tackling the cataloguing backlog for photographs and oversee discrete cataloguing projects.
4. Carry out annual audit tasks.
5. Oversee and maintain photographs storage at the V&A main site and at Blythe House.
6. Liaise with Conservation Department to maintain exhibitions and loans programme and Collection conservation priorities.

Keeper's Office

1. Carry out any other duties required by the Keeper.

Main tasks at Museums Sheffield

Whilst working at Museums Sheffield, the trainee will undertake the following:

1. Review and research the art photography collection at Museums Sheffield;
2. Develop the digitised catalogue of the collection, enhancing biographical details of the artists, identifying techniques, researching provenance and other information about the objects;
3. Add enhanced object records to the online database;
4. With the Curator of Visual Art, develop a photography display based on the collections at Museums Sheffield to be held at the Graves Gallery in autumn 2016.
5. Work with colleagues in the Visual Arts Collections & Exhibitions team, and Learning and Engagement staff, on initiatives and events to raise the profile of Sheffield's photography collection and share photography curatorship skills across Museums Sheffield's staff and across the region.
6. Work with the Visual Art curators to research a contemporary acquisition.

Other duties both at the V&A and Museums Sheffield

1. Be committed to health and safety and ensure familiarity with all of the Museum's health and safety policies and procedures.
2. Be security conscious, ensure familiarity and co-operation with all museum security procedures and ensure you wear a security pass at all times when on museum premises.
3. Promote equality and diversity in all aspects of your work by developing and maintaining positive working relationships, ensuring that colleagues are treated fairly and with respect/dignity and actively contributing to developments that support the museum's strategy for widening access, inclusion and diversity.
4. Carry out ad hoc duties as requested by appropriate managers within your department.

Person Specification

Essential requirements

1. Experience of curating photographic exhibitions and displays and of writing exhibition texts.
2. Demonstrable knowledge of the history of photography and a developed interest in art and design.
3. Creative and innovative flair with analytical and project management skills. Experience of managing projects, personal time management and the ability to work to deadlines.
4. A post-graduate qualification or equivalent professional experience in the history of art and / or museum administration or equivalent.
5. Working knowledge of museum documentation or similar database systems.
6. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills including the ability to make presentations to a variety of audiences both within the organisation and beyond.
7. Commitment, enthusiasm and responsiveness to opening up the collections to a broad audience, including non-traditional users.
8. Ability to work individually, and as a member of a team, with the capability to manage interns and volunteers.

Desirable requirements

1. Experience of working with similar photographic collections in a museum or gallery environment.
2. Working knowledge of a second language.
3. In-depth knowledge of the history and techniques of photography with a record of publishing scholarly research and a developed interest in art and design.
4. Experience of sourcing and collecting photography for a public institution.
5. Knowledge of the photography market and of fundraising.
6. Specific knowledge of an area of historic, classic or contemporary photography relating to the V&A collections.

OTHER INFORMATION

Hours/Salary

Net working hours (i.e. excluding meal breaks) are 36 per week

The salary for this role is £21,000. Normal level transfer and promotion rules will apply for internal candidates.

Annual Leave

28 days plus 8 days public holidays

Pension benefits

The Civil Service offers a choice of either an occupational pension or stakeholder pension, giving you the flexibility to choose a scheme that suits you best.

The 'Partnership' pension account is a stakeholder money purchase pension with an employer contribution based on age. Further details are available upon request or appointment.

Other benefits

Free entrance to all the major museums in London as well as many others.

An interest free season ticket or bicycle loan is available after three months.

Subject to the society's terms and conditions, V&A staff are entitled to membership of the Benenden Healthcare Society. Further information is available from HR or via their web-site on www.benenden-healthcare.org.uk

To apply

To apply online, please go to the V&A's website at www.vam.ac.uk/jobs

If you have any queries regarding the recruitment process, you can email us – hr@vam.ac.uk or telephone us on 020 7942 2937.

Closing date for receipt of applications is 1 September 2015

Interview expenses will not be paid unless there is a prior agreement.