



University of Brighton

Centre for Design History



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

Museum Visiting: New Perspectives and Future Directions

16-17 April 2026

Venue: University of Brighton, City Campus, 154 Edward Street, BN2 0JG.

Room 215 is available for the duration of the conference as a quiet space.

Thursday 16 April

08.45- Room Registration
09.15 101 Tea and coffee

09.15- Room **Welcome**
09.30 105 Claire Wintle, University of Brighton & Andrea Potts, Goldsmiths,
University of London

09.30- Room **Panel 1: What is a visitor, what constitutes visiting, and what do**
11.30 105 **visitors do?**

Laurajane Smith, Australian National University: The Affective Visitor:
engaging with emotions in the museum (online)

Theano Moussouri, University College London: The making of ‘the
visitor’.

Nanna Holdgaard and Anne Rørbæk Olesen, The National Museum
of Denmark: The Playing Visitor.

Kali Tzortzi, University of Patras: Digital sensory environments in
museums: new ways of thinking about visitor experience.

Chair: **Lara Perry**, University of Brighton

11.30- Room **Poster presentations by:**
12.00 101

Judith Abellán Reina, University of Barcelona
Claire Bailey-Ross, University of Portsmouth
Polina Gavin, Aston University
Alana Jelinek, artist
Catherine Speight, Historic Royal Palaces

Beixi Sun, University of Liverpool
Anna Tuggey, University of Sussex

Tea and coffee

12.00-13.00 Room 105 **Roundtable conversation with Tate:** *Can and how should museums safely and productively bring together diverse visitor groups?*

with Jean Tormey, Ruchika Gurung, Katherine Eves, India Harvey and Damali Ibreck. Supported by Claire Wintle, University of Brighton.

13.00-14.00 Room 101 Lunch

14.00-16:00 Room 105 **Panel 2: Understanding and Overcoming Barriers to Visiting**

Porchia Moore, University of Florida: Teaching to Transgress: Thinking Through Visitorship in the Polycrisis.

Emily Dawson, University College London: Museums are bad for you: lies, missing archives and graveyards.

Alison Eardley, University of Westminster (title tbc).

Samantha Bowen, Kings College London: Different ways of seeing and being in museum spaces for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Mark O'Neill and Suzanne Macleod, University of Leicester: Addressing the museum attendance and benefit gap: a strategic research project.

Chair: **Danika Parikh**, University of Sussex

16.00-16:30 Break

16.30-17.30 Room 105 **Roundtable conversation with the Tangata Moana Advisory Board, Royal Museums Greenwich:** *How can communities meaningfully reimagine and transform museum visiting?*

with Charlotte Paddock, Tash Vaike, Crystal Te Moananui- Squares (Māori, Ngāti Hako) and Johnny Lewis-Vaike. Supported by Anne Nielsen, University of Brighton.

19.00 Dinner (pre-booked).

Friday 17 April

08.45- Room Tea and coffee
09.00 101

09.00- Room **Panel 3: Methodologies for Understanding Museum Visiting**
11.00 105

Stuart Frost, The British Museum: Visitor insight and evaluation at the British Museum 2005-2025.

Shelby Navone, University of Leicester: Co-Designing Trust with Autistic Adults: Accessible Methodologies for Museum Visitor Research Practice.

Jona Piehl, HTW Berlin: Drawing Experiences. A graphic auto-ethnography of exhibition visits.

Martina Lentino, Clara Maria Apostolatos, and Beatrice Gruskin, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Building a Responsible and Responsive Visitor Research Practice.

Chair: **Megha Rajguru**, University of Brighton

11.00- Room **Tea and coffee**
11.30 101

11.30- Room **Panel 4: The Museum cares for visitors, the Museum harms visitors**
13.30 105

Divya Tolia-Kelly, University of Sussex: An Archaeology of 'race' at the museum: Being and Feeling in the Spaces of the Museum.

Andrea Potts, Goldsmiths, University of London: Museum Visitors, Memory and Colonialism.

Cornelia Thompson, University College London: Context and care: visiting the medical museum.

Pen Foreman, Bradford District Museum and Galleries: Radical change is mundane at the coal face – the case for empathy in museums practice.

Rafie Cecilia, Kings College London: GenAI in Museums: Hopes, Expectations and Concerns of Visitors with Disabilities.

Chair: **Helen Johnson**, University of Brighton

13.30- Room Lunch
14:30 101

14.30- Rooms **Workshop**
16.00

105 We welcome all delegates to participate in this interactive workshop.
104 Discussions will take place in breakout groups.
103
207 14.30-15.15: An opportunity to share your research, practice and
211 reflections on the conference proceedings.

15.15-16.00: We intend to develop a toolkit for the sector on museum
visiting. What would you like to see included in it?

16.15- Room Closing remarks and reflections, led by Claire Wintle and Andrea Potts
16.45 105

Speaker Biographies

Panel 1: What is a visitor, what constitutes visiting, and what do visitors do?

Professor Laurajane Smith

Laurajane Smith is Research Director of the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies, the Australian National University. She is also a fellow of the Society for the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Her books include *Uses of Heritage* (2006) and *Emotional Heritage* (2021).

Professor Theano Moussouri

Theano Moussouri is Professor of Museum Studies at UCL. An interdisciplinary social scientist, she investigates visitor experience and museum and heritage practices, exploring how cultural institutions shape identity, belonging, and meaning, particularly for non-dominant communities.

Dr. Nanna Holdgaard

Nanna Holdgaard is a Senior Researcher at the National Museum of Denmark. Her practice-based and cross-disciplinary work encompasses audience research, participatory design, and digital media. In her research, she examines the complex dynamics and interplay between audiences, cultural institutions, and cultural policy.

Dr. Anne Rørbæk Olesen

Anne Rørbæk Olesen is a Senior Researcher at the National Museum of Denmark. Her research focuses on museum practices, co-design processes, and visitor engagement. She specialises in qualitative methodologies and collaborates closely with practitioners to explore how institutional priorities and interpretive approaches shape visitor experiences and organisational change.

Dr. Kali Tzortzi

Kali Tzortzi (PhD The Bartlett, UCL) is Associate Professor in Museology, Department of Architecture, University of Patras, and Principal Investigator of the HFRI-funded 'Understanding Museum Architecture for Digital Experiences' project. Her book 'Museum Space: Where Architecture Meets Museology' (Routledge, 2015) sets out a methodology and theoretical framework for the study of museums.

Poster Presentations

Judith Abellán Reina

Judith Abellán-Reina is a PhD candidate in Heritage Management and Museology at the University of Barcelona and a member of the DIDPATRI research group. She holds degrees in Cultural Heritage Management, Humanities and Journalism. Her research focuses on social participation, community engagement in art museums, heritage studies and education practice.

Dr. Claire Bailey-Ross

Claire Bailey-Ross is an Associate Professor in Digital Heritage within the Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries at the University of Portsmouth. Her research focuses on Human Information Interaction in digital cultural heritage, exploring how people discover, engage with, and value information in digital heritage environments. Situated in both Digital Humanities and Museum Studies, her interdisciplinary work spans user experience studies, value of digital heritage assets, and the wider social implications of technological innovation in museum contexts.

Dr. Polina Gavin

Polina Gavin is a researcher and educator in English language and linguistics, with expertise in cognitive stylistics, reader response analysis and participatory approaches to art. She is currently exploring how the language of ekphrasis can help advance accessibility and immersive engagement with art in museums.

Alana Jelinek

Alana Jelinek is an artist who writes about the role and value of art in society from the perspective of an artist. In addition to large-scale site-specific art interventions and collaborating with others to make art, Alana has a studio practice making paintings. Underlying her art and her thinking is a deep commitment to the profound value of diversity. For more see alanajelinek.com.

Beixi Sun

Beixi Sun is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Liverpool and currently a visiting researcher at the Institute of History, University of Warsaw. Her research examines prison heritage, museum interpretation, and memory politics in China, focusing on how carceral sites are reinterpreted through state narratives and visitor engagement.

Anna Tuggey

Anna Tuggey is a PhD researcher at the University of Sussex. Her interdisciplinary study brings her expertise in education and heritage to the puzzle of affect in house museum

audiences. Evaluating patterns of personal circumstances and cultural knowledge emerging from her visitor data, her study offers provocation to curatorial practice.

Roundtable conversation with Tate: *Can and how should museums safely and productively bring together diverse visitor groups?*

Jean Tormey

Jean Tormey is Curator: Early Years and Families' at Tate, focusing on family learning at Tate Britain (Story Space, Play Studio and Mini Wonders). In recent years, Jean has brought her interest in how the principles of therapeutic play can be applied to intergenerational, child-led creative learning in galleries, to her role.

Dr. Ruchika Gurung

Ruchika Gurung is a Curator of Community and Partnerships at Tate Britain, championing participatory and creative models of engagement. She has led on community engagement for the legacies of empire and enslavement project at the University of Cambridge Museums and taught in institutions like Whistling Woods, Symbiosis International University and University of East Anglia.

Katherine Eves

Katherine Eves is Assistant Curator of Early Years and Families at Tate Britain. With experience working across generations, she champions inclusive gallery spaces and believes in the power of artists and the arts to bring people together, fostering meaningful engagement from the earliest years.

India Harvey

India Harvey is a socially engaged artist whose practice explores 'difference' as a positive universal connector. Through physical and social design their work investigates how we relate to other's experiences through play, risk and sensory inclusion. Recent commissions include: Tate, Barbican, the V&A, LBBB, Bethlem Gallery & Camden Arts Centre & Charleston in Lewes.

Damali Ibreck

Damali Ibreck has worked in community and access led arts education for 25 years, within arts organisations and independently. She is currently a Doctoral Researcher at Tate and Goldsmiths University exploring how learning, rooted in diaspora family memory and relational practice, can help shape and mediate organisational systems. thesouthnorth.org

Panel 2: Understanding and Overcoming Barriers to Visiting

Dr. Porchia Moore

Porchia Moore is the Associate Director of the Center for Arts, Migration, and Entrepreneurship and an Associate Professor and Program Head of Critical Museum Studies in the College of the Arts at the University of Florida. She is Co-Director of the Inluseum, Co-Creator of the Visitors of Color Project, and founding architect of Museums and Race. She is a prolific international speaker and writer.

Professor Emily Dawson

Emily (she/hers) is Professor of Education, Science & Society in the Department of Science & Technology Studies at University College London. Over the past 20 years she has researched how structural inequalities – with a focus on racism and racialisation - shape people's cultural experiences, including privileged groups as legitimate publics and creating shadow-publics of everyone else through myriad, embedded exclusive practices. Together with Vanessa Mignan Jenkins and Toni Dancstep, Emily has just co-authored a social justice workbook for practitioners working in science centres, museums and similar institutions.

Samantha Bowen

Samantha is a first-year Post Graduate Research student with an extensive museum career spanning 28 years. Her award-winning work focuses on the accessibility of museums to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, inspired by her lived/loved experience as mother to Lucy, her disabled daughter.

Dr. Mark O'Neill

Mark O'Neill worked for over 30 years in museums, serving as Head of Glasgow Museums from 1998-2009. From 2009-2016 he was Director of Policy & Research for Glasgow Life, the charity which delivers arts, museums, libraries, and sports for Glasgow City, the largest organisation of its kind in Europe.

Roundtable conversation with the Tangata Moana Advisory Board, Royal Museums Greenwich: *How can communities meaningfully reimagine and transform museum visiting?*

Charlotte Paddock

Charlotte is Senior Manager: Community Participation at Royal Museums Greenwich and supported the establishment of the Tangata Moana Advisory Board. Her practice focuses on ethical community participation and creative collaborations that challenge traditional institutional narratives and enable museums to become more inclusive, relevant and accountable to the communities they serve.

Tash Vaike

Tash has been on board working with the National Maritime Museum since its very initial stages of involvement with the Pasifika diaspora in the UK and is the longest-serving member of the Tangata Moana Advisory Board. She has seen the gallery go through the many stages of its journey.

Crystal Te Moananui- Squares (Māori, Ngāti Hako)

Crystal is a photographer and artist with InterIsland Collective. She has been on the Tangata Moana advisory board for the Pacific Encounters Gallery at the National Maritime Museum since 2021. She really loves helping to make the gallery a living space that puts the Pacific community firmly at its heart.

Johnny Lewis-Vaike

Johnny is the youngest member of the Board and brings a voice of the youth from a Pasifika lens, also representing the youth within the UK Pacific diaspora. Growing up and continuing to reside within the UK, she aims to help change the narrative of her people and their stories within institutions.

Anne Nielsen

Anne Nielsen is a museum curator and researcher who specialises in provenance research, collecting histories and documentation practices. She is currently a collaborative PhD candidate based between the University of Brighton and the British Museum. She co-leads the 'Museums, Exhibitions and Archives' research strand of the Centre for Design History.

Panel 3: Methodologies for Understanding Museum Visiting

Stuart Frost

Stuart Frost is Head of Interpretation at the British Museum, London. He has worked on many exhibitions and gallery projects at the Museum since 2009 and leads on visitor research and evaluation. He has written numerous book chapters and articles in peer reviewed journals, and helped create a wide variety of displays.

Shelby Navone

Shelby is a Postgraduate Researcher in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester and a Fellow of the Institute for Digital Culture. Their research explores how immersive digital culture experiences can be made accessible with and for autistic adults, while also rethinking how visitor research can be neuroinclusively designed.

Professor Jona Piehl

Jona Piehl is a professor for communication design at HTW Berlin where she teaches across the areas of information design and spatial communication. Her research and her design practice explore processes and methods of visual storytelling, in particular in the context of narrative environments such as museums and exhibitions.

Martina Lentino

Martina Lentino is Project Manager, Interpretive Planning & Evaluation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Martina has held two Kress Interpretive Fellowships at the Art Institute of Chicago and The Met, respectively. She holds a BA in Art History and Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Chicago, and an MA in the History of Art and Archaeology from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

Clara Maria Apostolatos

Clara Maria Apostolatos is Research Associate, Interpretive Planning, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, following a two-year Kress Interpretive Fellowship at The Museum. She holds a master's in Art History and Archaeology from the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University and a bachelor's in Art History and Psychology from Columbia University. Her writing on modern and contemporary art appears in Burlington Contemporary, Hyperallergic, The Brooklyn Rail, among others.

Beatrice Gruskin

Beatrice Gruskin is the 2025-2026 Interpretive Planning and Evaluation Fellow at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Prior to this position, she completed a fellowship in evaluation and audience impact at The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, and has conducted visitor research at The National Archives in Washington, D.C. She

holds a BA in Anthropology and French from Johns Hopkins University, and an MA in Arts Administration & Cultural Policy from Goldsmiths, University of London.

Panel 4: The Museum cares for visitors, the Museum harms visitors

Professor Divya P. Tolia-Kelly

Divya P. Tolia-Kelly is Professor of Geography & Heritage Studies at Sussex. Divya was born in Kenya and arrived in the UK in 1973. Her research and teaching is focussed on postcolonial and anti-racist approaches to cultural geographies, migration, landscape, memory, heritage, visual culture and material culture using participatory methodologies. Her current writing project is a research monograph entitled 'An Archaeology of Race at the Museum'.

Dr. Andrea Potts

Andrea is a lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research focuses on how museum visitors experience, perceive and use contemporary exhibitions that represent colonial histories and legacies. Her first monograph, titled 'Museum Visitors, Memory and Colonialism', is forthcoming with Routledge.

Cornelia Thompson

Cornelia is a PhD candidate in the UCL Institute of Archaeology researching medical museums as distinct heritage spaces. Through incorporating interdisciplinary theory around embodiment, affect and illness experience, their research highlights the importance of context in understanding museum visitation and considers how medical museums function as spaces of care.

Dr. Pen Foreman

Pen Foreman is the Head of Learning and Outreach at Bradford District Museums and Galleries, and also leads on accessibility and evaluation. They are a queer and disabled heritage sector equity agitator, former archaeologist, brick collector, and proud northerner.

Dr. Rafie Cecilia

Rafie Cecilia is Lecturer in Museum & Gallery Studies at KCL, and an affiliate of the King's Institute for Artificial Intelligence. Rafie's research looks at how technology, AI, and digital innovation impact the museum experience of professionals and audiences with disabilities, focusing on disability as an empowering drive in the sector.