

Making Museum Professionals, 1850–Present (London, 23 May 23)

Birkbeck, University of London, May 23, 2023

Deadline: Mar 6, 2023

Claire Wintle, University of Brighton

MAKING MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS, 1850-THE PRESENT.

An AHRC-supported research network.

Call for participation, Workshop 1: Museum Work: Hierarchies and Barriers, Exclusion and Inclusion.

This is the first workshop from the new AHRC-funded research network, Making Museum Professionals, 1850-the present. The network brings together academics and museum professionals to investigate the past, present and future of museum work. We seek to support and develop campaigns for fairness, inclusion and transparency in the museum sector by investigating the historical roots of the museum professions and the structures that supported them, from the birth of the modern museum (c. 1850) to the present day.

The first workshop will take place on 23rd May 2023, at Birkbeck, University of London. Confirmed keynotes so far include Professor Fiona Candlin (Birkbeck), Tamsin Russell (Museums Association), and Louise McAward-White for Fair Museum Jobs. There are a small number of bursaries of up to £100 available to support the participation of minoritized researchers and/or practitioners without institutional support.

The Making Museum Professionals network responds to growing campaigns in the museum sector for fairer recruitment and career structures. Across the world, campaign groups have highlighted the systems of inequality facing many of those working in and with museums. This new network will support such campaigns for fairness, inclusion and transparency, by investigating the historical roots of the museum professions and the structures that supported them, from the birth of the modern museum (c. 1850) to the present day. It asks how museum professions came into being, and how they acted to produce particular competences and ways of working. Critically, the network also seeks to develop productive links between academics and museum professionals, creating spaces, practices and outputs for dialogue between past, present and future, and to conceptualise historical practice as a tool to improve accessible professionalisation today.

The network's opening workshop, 1) Museum Work: Hierarchies and Barriers, Exclusion and Inclusion will take place in-person at Birkbeck in May 2023. It will consider particularly how hierarchies within and barriers to museum work have developed historically and are in evidence today, and how such hierarchies were and continue to be challenged and negotiated by those excluded and disempowered by museums. Confirmed keynote contributors so far include Professor Fiona Can-

dlin (Birkbeck), Tamsin Russell (Museums Association), and Louise McAward-White for Fair Museum Jobs. Subsequent workshops of the network will consider 2) the development of training and career paths within museum practice (online, autumn 2023) and 3) transnational forces in the development of museum professionals (Berlin, spring/summer 2024).

We are currently seeking proposals for the first workshop, for short presentations from museum practitioners and scholars working on museum history or practice, on topics relating to hierarchies, barriers and inclusion/exclusion in museum work, from a historical or contemporary perspective. Proposals might address:

How have hierarchies of class, disability, gender, race and sexuality impacted on the museum workforce, paid and unpaid? Have they worked equally at different types of organisation?

How have processes of professionalisation acted to include and exclude different groups?

How might these processes be reversed, mitigated or reimaged?

The often-derogatory term 'amateur' has often been used to reinforce museum workforce hierarchies but this masks the important contributions volunteers and other unpaid specialists have made to the sector. What are the characteristics of such practitioners and how has this group developed historically?

We welcome proposals which deal with different types and sizes of museum and consider a range of museum professions (e.g. conservation, design, education). We value the perspectives of professional networks and campaign groups, and presentations which – where possible – consider links between different time periods.

We anticipate a full and enriching day of knowledge sharing led by many different voices. In the first instance, please submit a summary or abstract of 150-200 words with a short speaker biography, describing the content of a 15-minute presentation, to Kate Hill (University of Lincoln) and Claire Wintle (University of Brighton) at museumprofessions@lincoln.ac.uk.

Depending on the number and nature of proposals received, we may approach participants to present their ideas in alternative formats (e.g. roundtables, conversations, lightning presentations) to make the most of the day and encourage dialogue and a diversity of perspective. Proposals will be considered by a panel of academics and museum practitioners.

Deadline for submissions: Monday 6 March 2023. We will respond by Monday 20 March 2023.

Bursaries: a small number of bursaries of up to £100 will be available to support the participation of minoritized researchers and/or practitioners without institutional support. This might contribute to travel or loss of earnings costs. Please mention when emailing if you would like to explore this further.

For more information, about this and other workshops, as well as the network, see:

<https://makingmuseumprofessionals.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/workshops/>

You can also follow us on twitter [@makingmusejobs](https://twitter.com/makingmusejobs)

Reference:

CFP: Making Museum Professionals, 1850-Present (London, 23 May 23). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 5, 2023 (accessed Apr 3, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/38491>>.