

Transforming Future Museums:
International Museum Academy Greece

Developing Exhibitions Toolkit

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International Museum Academy Transforming Future Museums

Museums and galleries in Greece are experiencing change, rapid growth and transformation. **British Council** launched Transforming Future Museums (January 2016 – July 2018), an intensive professional development programme designed to train a new generation of museum leaders and enable the sector in Greece to respond to the challenges and possibilities of a new era.

The programme offers organisations and individuals the opportunity for exchange with the UK and the necessary support and tools to test new ways of working, build pathways for collaboration, and generate long term relationships based on peer-to-peer learning and exchange of good practice. A crucial part of this programme was the International Museum Academy, which took place in Athens and Thessaloniki – in October and November 2016 and 2017.

To find out more about International Museum Academy Transforming Future Museums you can watch this short video <https://vimeo.com/217152476>

The courses comprising the first International Museum Academy in Greece were:

- Project Management for Museums,
- Developing Exhibitions,
- Fundraising and Income Generation, and
- Audience Development.

This toolkit has been developed to share the knowledge delivered in the training sessions with a wider audience.

The Transforming Future Museums programme is a British Council initiative supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

Course introduction

Developing Exhibitions

In this toolkit you will explore how to plan a temporary exhibition, refresh, permanent collection displays, deliver effective museum interpretation and implement strategies that improve accessibility.

The aim is to leave you feeling **inspired, creative and looking forward** to the future. You will be able to take away ideas and adapt them for use in your own organisation.

Tutor biography

Susan Lord is the curator of the Bury Art Museum & Sculpture Centre. She has worked in the museum and gallery sector in the UK since 2001, primarily within collections and curation. She has contributed towards curatorial and collections management policies and has been a lead on accreditation bids and grant applications. Collaborating with artists, universities and other arts organisations both regionally and internationally has been a prominent part of her career. Susan has worked on projects in Finland, Spain, China, USA and Japan on behalf of Bury Art Museum. This has allowed her to bring back new ways of working and to establish strong relationships with international partners.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this toolkit you will have an understanding of:

- Current UK best practice in refreshing permanent displays, creating temporary exhibitions, developing interpretation and increasing accessibility
- What can be achieved by refreshing permanent displays and the approaches that are possible
- How to plan a temporary exhibition that generates impact for your organisation
- Different forms of interpretation and how it can contribute to a better experience for your audience
- The importance of audience accessibility and how best to improve it

Five things to know about developing exhibitions

- 1. Audience** – Understand your audiences and be ready to challenge them
- 2. Teamwork** – A successful project or exhibition begins and ends with teamwork
- 3. Creativity** – Objects and art displayed in creative ways can capture the imagination
- 4. Collaboration** – Collaborating with guest curators, artists and organisations within and beyond the cultural sector can stretch the limitations of displaying and interpreting your collections
- 5. Risk-taking** – Be brave, experiment and test new ideas. Don't be afraid of addressing and exploring contemporary issues

01 Refreshing a permanent collection display

Refreshing displays that have been untouched for three years or more provides an opportunity to reinterpret the collections. Redisplays allow museums to exhibit more of their stored collections and to highlight new acquisitions.

The process can encourage curators to explore new approaches and ways of working. There is potential to display your collection in a visually imaginative and innovative way and allow objects to tell different stories, potentially leaving behind the narrative they entered the collection with.

New displays can attract new audiences and encourage repeat visitors to museums and galleries. They can be crucial to ensuring that people keep coming back to discover more. It is an opportunity to demonstrate how the collection can be relevant to contemporary audiences, which can in turn widen your audience, make people feel more included and strengthen communities.

This can be done by acknowledging and working with underrepresented sections of your visitors. For example you may want to reach out to members of the LGBTQ community,

people who suffer from dementia, or those who have mental health issues. In this way, a redisplay can be an invaluable opportunity to to revisit your education and outreach programme and make links with new audiences in schools, colleges, retirement homes, universities and community groups.

This process offers fresh potential to promote your organisation, attract more publicity, and can also improve your fundraising and income generating capabilities.



Photo credit: Deutsches Museum

Industry practice – Art galleries

Traditionally, art galleries have favoured the **chronological** approach to displaying their art collections, featuring a progression of one art movement after another. This approach can however, be problematic should you have significant gaps within your collection.

Driven by a desire for change and to become more relevant in the late 20th century, museums and galleries began to favour the **thematic hang**. This approach combines objects and artefacts thematically rather than chronologically.

Many museums regard the thematic approach as more contemporary and less hierarchical. It allows for greater flexibility and a chance for the viewer to draw their own conclusions between artworks or objects. However, thematic displays can sometimes offer a very limited experience in that they can only emphasise a moment in time rather than showcasing the bigger picture. The thematic approach offers a series of stories rather than an overview of art history.

Tate Modern and the Centre Pompidou favour the thematic hang. On opening in 2000, Tate Modern used the thematic hang, displaying Monet alongside Richard Long and a Matisse bronze facing a Marlene Duma's ink drawing. A rehang at New York's MoMA took a similar approach with its 20th century collection.

In 2000, Charles Stuckey, former curator of Washington's National Gallery, noted that MoMA and Tate's rehangs reflected **“the pressures of political correctness. They want to show that the history of art is not about masterpieces”**.

Claire Bishop puts forward in her book 'Radical Museology', 2013, **“while thematic hangs have permitted a greater diversity, they also give rise to the hermeneutical question of historical anchoring, if the past and the present are collapsed into trans-historical and trans-geographical clusters, how can the differences between places and periods be understood”**

In 2013 Tate Liverpool abandoned the chronological and thematic approach to employ a new technique - the 'Constellation'. This approach uses 'trigger word' works by creating groupings of artworks. It allows the curator to position artworks together that have different art historical paths, thus making visible sense of those hidden connections that arose. To help explain the theory behind each grouping, the curators used word cloud diagrams and key words.

Similarly, at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), they have left behind the thematic approach - the approach of a curator having an idea and then selecting pictures to illustrate that idea. Instead they have placed the focus on the artist and their intentions. The curators step back from imposing their will on the paintings.

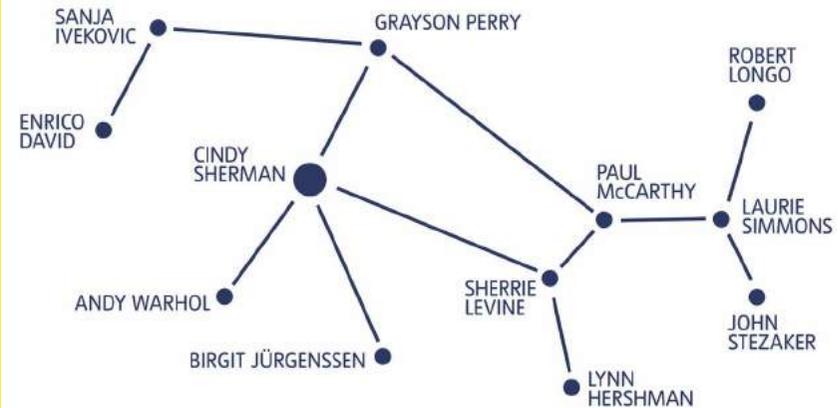


Image Credit: ©Tate, London 2017. Constellation of artworks in the Cindy Sherman display from the Tate Liverpool

Industry practice – Museums

In the past Museums have sometimes been perceived as simply storage spaces for our cultural heritage and designed as spaces for exhibitions that tell the history of their local area. In the 21st century, it is expected that Museums can deliver a comprehensive view of how humans have come to understand the world. They are required to explore new ways of drawing knowledge from the collections making displays and exhibitions relevant to wider audiences.

One way to engage in a contemporary dialogue is to refresh permanent museum displays in such a way that it speaks to



Image Credit: Object Conversations, ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

diverse local communities. There are a number of ways curators can do this, from working with companies outside the museum sector to developing alternative in-house display techniques. Objects can be displayed in abundance or as a singular iconic object which lends itself to telling a particular story.



Image Credit: Object Conversations, ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

‘Object Conversations’, is another method for reinterpreting a display or exhibition. It involves juxtaposing historic objects alongside those from contemporary culture so that that they reinterpret themselves, provide visual prompts and provoke questions from the viewer. This approach challenges audiences, encouraging their curiosity and allowing them to make their own connections. This can be an inexpensive yet effective method and can be used throughout an exhibition or simply featured within a smaller display.

Case study

Looking outside the sector to enhance innovation – Manchester Museum (University of Manchester) & villa eugenie

In 2011 Manchester Museum opened the door to its newly redisplayed Living Worlds gallery. Henry McGhie, the head of collections and curator of zoology, who led the project, wanted to transform a pleasant but rather irrelevant gallery of taxidermied mammals into a space that helped support the Museum's goal of *'working towards a sustainable world'*. Drawing together recent work on understanding people's various connections with nature, and focusing on *'the natural world and our relationship with it'*, the Museum team aimed for a project that was ambitious, and would help transform how people think about nature and natural heritage, and rethink the role and potential of galleries relating to natural heritage. The gallery was to encourage individual visitors to reflect on their own relationships with nature, to provide a flexible space to help frame discussions and experiences around people and natural heritage, and to help promote positive feelings, thoughts and actions relating to nature, and to discuss difficult subjects.



Image Credit: Ant Clausen/Manchester Museum

The Museum team chose a designer who could provide what the Museum could not provide internally. Knowing that emotion and drama were crucial to the project, they sought designers that were known to excel in innovation, thoughtful and well-executed design and one-off memorable experiences. They selected villa eugénie, a Brussels-based design firm specialising in one off events, notably for fashion events, who had never worked on a permanent museum gallery.

Living Worlds features a series of installations that work on their own and collectively, including a display of origami cranes with a piece of rubble from the Hiroshima atomic blast and a mounted crane (a large bird), plaster cast of a woman and a dog from Pompeii, lantern slides, deep sea animals, and much more. These installations aim to help visitors think about and talk about their own relationships with nature and about environmental issues. Living Worlds focusses on encouraging people to think, rather than telling them what to think. The gallery is visually stunning, and intellectually robust, bringing together the very best in thinking on people and nature, environmental messaging, and focussing on inspiration and empowerment.

McGhie said *“you don’t necessarily instill a sense of value in what you’re looking at by putting a label with it: we need to engage with people head, heart and soul.”* Living Worlds has stood the test of time, down to its flexibility, and has influenced many other museums and museum practice. A large sculpture of Peppered Moths was added in 2016 as part of an exhibition on

climate change and climate change action (designed by MET studio): a new addition that continues the trajectory of the Museum’s work around civic engagement with the natural environment and environmental issues.

This redisplay was funded with £200,000 from the North West Development Agency (no longer in operation), which aimed to fund innovation. Living Worlds is an example of how non-traditional partnerships can unleash creativity and vision, producing exceptional and memorable cultural experiences and creating new opportunities for people, museums and their partners.



Image Credit: Ant Clausen/Manchester Museum

Identifying, enabling and implementing change

While some organisations may not be able to change their entire display - even making changes in a smaller space such as a display case can offer opportunity to test new practices, gradually adjust your organisation's approach and stimulate new perceptions and reactions from your visitors.

**How would you start planning a small museum display?
Here are some things you may need to think about:**

1. Why does the museum display needs refreshing?

Is the display no longer aligned with the museum's mission statement or exhibition policy? Do you need to reflect current museological approaches to museum display? Have your visitors expressed a desire to see a certain part of the collection? Perhaps your education team are requesting new approaches to the display that are more relevant to the school curriculum. You may have new acquisitions that you want to exhibit or more simply your display is just looking tired and old fashioned. Whatever the reasons, it is important to identify and remember what these are.

2. Visitor's needs

Prior to making changes you could conduct an audience survey to help you identify the types of museum displays your visitors would like to see. Is there a particular group of objects that they find inspirational or a part of the town's history they want to learn more about? Gathering visitor comments like this is a great way to help you persuade management or your governing body to enable and facilitate the process. You can find out more about Audience research and surveys within the [Transforming Future Museums: Audience Development toolkit](#)



Image Credit: Object Conversations, ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

3. The idea vs the object

Start with a clear visual concept of the exhibition. Art and Museum displays tend to start life differently. An initial idea for an art exhibition is often idea or concept led, whereas the objects themselves can be the starting point for a museum display.



Image credit: Glasgow Life

4. Budget

The size of the budget will inevitably dictate how ambitious your display can be. Make sure your budget is in place before embarking on any work. For more ambitious projects you may want to consider applying for external funding or approaching sponsors who could help financial assistance or in-kind support. More information on this can be found in the Transforming Future Museums: Fundraising toolkit

5. Research and interpretation

Most museums have research stretching back many years, that focuses on a particular collection or object. This should be your starting point. Interpretation should be kept to a minimum. Whilst it can be tempting to over interpret, it is important to be mindful of the concentration span that your visitor has. Oversized labels can spoil the aesthetic enjoyment of a display and labelling should be kept to a minimum. Interpretation can take many forms - from in-house exhibition guides, object labels, introductory panels, wall vinyl, audio-visual guides. Interpretation needs to be carefully planned in advance, proofread, printed or sent to production.

6. Display techniques

Your display should attract the viewer but not distract attention from your objects. It should provoke emotional reactions and stimulate memory. Displays should fully mobilise the viewers' senses. By displaying museum objects innovatively, audiences will become culturally richer for their visit. What is it that you want to communicate and what stories do you want to tell? Since you have identified the stories or themes you want to communicate you can then begin to identify which display technique is most suited to your needs. What are the practical requirements of the layout of the display? Consider the use of plinths, set dressing items, Perspex stands, lighting, sound and other audio-visuals.

7. Scheduling and communication

Assess the schedules and needs of the teams and individuals that are involved with the project. What work can reasonably happen within your time frame? Set up regular meetings with all necessary internal and external stakeholders. Consult and advocate for your project with people across your museum or gallery, especially those in Education, Conservation, Collections Management, Art Handling and Front of House.

8. Selecting objects

Most museums have collections management databases from which the curatorial team can research the objects in the collection to determine which should be displayed. Once objects have been selected, a list is provided to the collections management team who will then locate them, pack them in-store, and then move them to the gallery or display area on the date required. This process should allow for updating documentation such as in-house object movement forms, box content forms and database location records.



Image credit: Glasgow Life

9. Assessing conservation needs

It is important to consider the conservation needs of the objects you have selected. Do the conditions of the gallery meet the requirements of these objects? Are the objects in a stable condition or too fragile to display? Is the artwork or object particularly sensitive to light? Does it need cleaning or remedial conservation undertaken to make it display ready? Once you have assessed the conservation needs of your objects, liaise with the conservation team and negotiate any conditions that need to be met or work that has to be undertaken. More detailed guidance on best practice can be found through the Collections Trust, 'Collections Care and Conservation'.

<http://collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-management/collections-care-and-conservation/>



Activity

Start with your museum's floor plan – either draw it on a large sheet of paper or tape together some visitor maps. Highlight the areas where you could start planning your display refresh. This could be just a single display case.

Refer to Audience Development Toolkit to explore your audience development strategy.

1. Use the Stakeholder Map (page 20 of the Audience Development Toolkit) to identify the types of audiences who currently engage with the museum or who might engage in the future. If you are able to, spend some time in the area to observe the visitors. Talk to the other staff who frequently work there. Do you observe visitor groups who weren't on your map?

2. Develop your visitor personas (page 21 of the Audience Development Toolkit). A persona is a way of capturing the key motivations of your visitors - their demographics, geography, behaviour, attitudes and needs. What did you hear them say? Which areas did they engage with (or not)? When did they leave?

3. Consider your focus area. Looking back at the guidance in this chapter, begin to draw up how the display refresh could look like, for whom and for what purpose.

Refer to the Refreshing your display activity on the next page.

Tool: Refreshing your display

Thinking of your focus area within your museum or gallery:

1. Why might this area need refreshing?

2. What might good look like from the visitors' perspective?

3. How might you select objects?

4. How might you start developing the visual concept?

5. What display techniques might you experiment with? How might you assess conservation needs?

Temporary exhibitions offer the opportunity to bring the best of international art practice to your local town or city. By displaying work by national and internationally renowned artists, you give your local people the opportunity to see great art without a need for them to travel. It also demonstrates a commitment to investing in artists and to push the boundaries of art practice and exhibition making.

Temporary Exhibitions can be a key means of engaging with wider audiences, encouraging new and diverse visitors and an opportunity to better represent minority groups. They allow for increased access to your collections by showing some of the previously unseen permanent collection. Quality temporary displays can boost visitor figures encourage repeat visits, and generate income - through entrance fees and donations. They have the potential to generate additional publicity for your organisation and can be used to show major works that your organisation may not be able to display more permanently.

Current trends

Current curatorial practice in the UK is moving away from the more traditional exhibition categories like the solo show, the mid career survey show, the group show. Alternative models that encourage debate and dialogue, investigation of other disciplines such as maths and science or exploration of contemporary social and political issues are favoured over drawing attention to the importance of artistic practice.

There is also increased focus on overcoming the limitations of the exhibition format. This is highlighted by the amount of events, talks, and symposia, which are fast becoming an integrated part of the exhibition offer and included within the core programme. These platforms allow for further interpretation that might be overwhelming if included in the exhibition. Tate Modern's new **'Switch House'**, plays host to Tate Exchange, an "open experiment", occupying an entire floor of the building. The programme invites organisations from across the UK to display their work. It's a place to collaborate, test ideas and discover new perspectives through art.

Current practice – Guest curators

Increasingly in the UK, galleries are employing guest curators to curate temporary exhibitions. This is a good way to introduce fresh ideas a novel approach into your temporary exhibitions programme. A guest curator can bring with them their reputation and contacts in the art world. It can also raise your galleries profile considerably by being well reported in the art press. Opportunities for creative collaboration between the museum/gallery and guest curator allows for new vision and different types of interpretation you may not have previously considered.

Current practice – Artist as the curator

Working with artists to curate temporary exhibitions is also a new trend emerging.

Artists are not beholden to a particular approach, perspective or traditions of curatorial practice. The Artist's approach to selecting works may differ completely and obscure or less exhibited objects from the stores may have an opportunity to be seen. Artists may draw connections not through chronology or nationality or even medium genre or style but in a very intuitive way. They may invite us to redirect our way of looking at objects and even the world at large, and question the very role of exhibition making.

Working with an artist who takes on the role of curator can be both rewarding and exhilarating as they bring to the project new ideas and influences. It can also be a very challenging relationship because the artist-curator is not familiar with your venue, collections, or way of working. To be successful it is important to develop a good relationship, communicate frequently and never presume anything.

This relationship requires that the the in-house curator works as a facilitator, smoothing the way for the artist-curator to be able to achieve their vision.

In the run up to the general election in 2015, the Hayward Gallery invited seven UK-based artists to curate the exhibition 'History is now – Artists Take on Britain'. The show examined the last 70 years of British History and showcased 250 objects from public and private collections. The variety of ideas, collections and objects coming together for the first time provided new insight into how we collectively and individually remember and reconsider the past.

Case study

Ydessa Hendeles Artist As Curator

Artist Ydessa Hendeles denounces curatorial objectivity and proudly calls the exhibitions she curates 'Imaginative Works'. Since the 1990s, she has displayed objects of art next to objects of everyday culture in order to explore narratives of personal loss and political displacement. In 'The Teddy Bear Project', she displayed thousands of anonymous photos of children alongside teddy bears, hanging everything Salon Style to evoke the feeling of a 19th century museum. Her approach raises questions as to why we collect and why we own things.



Image credit: "The Keeper," 2016. Courtesy New Museum, New York. Photo: Maris Hutchinson / EPW Studio

Case study

Ciara Phillips: Yours and Mine is Ours Benaki Museum, Athens 2017

The temporary exhibition *Yours and Mine is Ours* by Glasgow-based artist Ciara Phillips was the fifth edition of British Council's long running Artists in Dialogue programme with the Benaki Museum. The collaboration with the Benaki Museum, started in 2011 and aims to support the production of new works by artists from Greece and the UK that are inspired by the Museum and its collection.

Research into the museum's comprehensive collection of the Greek photographer Nelly's, prompted artist Ciara Phillips to revisit her own work, particularly her ongoing series *Workshop* (2010-), which transforms the gallery into a participatory space.

Phillips invited Greek photographers Antonakis and Margarita Myrogianni, museum staff and children to participate in *Yours and Mine is Ours*.

Within the collaborative space of the exhibition everyone was encouraged to explore the Benaki photographic records, Phillips photography and share their own personal photographic archives.



Thoughts and ideas were shared and new material was produced collaboratively and displayed as part of the exhibition. This temporary show reflects on the role of the museum and proposes alternate models of engaging with the collection, the institution and its visitors.

<https://www.britishcouncil.gr/en/events/ciara-phillips-yours-and-mine-is-ours>



Planning a temporary exhibition

Planning a temporary exhibition involves many different processes, activities and stakeholders.

Multi-tasking and managing the following different areas is crucial to a successful show:

- Identifying your idea or theme
- Conducting audience research
- Designing the exhibition
- Creating interpretation
- Managing artists and/or guest curators
- Requesting loans
- Creating facilities reports
- Booking exhibition insurance and transportation
- Implementing the necessary standards in lighting, temperature and humidity

Temporary Art Exhibition Timeline

This example temporary exhibition timeline is a practical guide aimed at emerging curators based in non-profit galleries in the UK. Much of the information will be relevant to independent curators and exhibition designers in Europe. The timeline includes who, within the museum, may be responsible for different areas of work, however this may change depending on an organisation’s size or structure. This example shows the timeline working back from the exhibition launch on September 28th.

Year one		
Date	Aim	Who
Jan - May	Exhibition idea and curatorial research	Curatorial team
June	Produce a final list of artworks which includes contact details of lending institution, title, size, weight, loan restrictions, loan charges, insurance values, copyright restrictions, specific installation requirements	Curatorial team
	Assess any conservation needs of artworks	Conservation team
	Plan the design of the exhibition	Curatorial team
	Curatorial and Education team meet to explore ideas for audience development	Curatorial team / Education team
July	Submit grant applications	Curatorial and/or Fundraising team
August/ September	Request loans, send facilities reports (or UK Registrars forms)	Curatorial team

Year two		
Date	Aim	Who
January	Issue loan agreements	Curatorial team
	Issue artist/guest curator contracts	Curatorial/Legal teams
1st June	Copyright secured for images to be used in exhibition catalogue and any promotional literature produced by the gallery	Collections management/Registrar teams
	Final draft of catalogue text proof read	Curatorial/Interpretation/Education teams
15th June	Edited draft completed	Curatorial/Interpretation/Education teams
20th June	Catalogue images and final draft to be sent to Designer	Communications/ Publicity teams
15th July	Shipping arrangements for artworks finalised	Collections management/Registrar teams
August	Arrangements made for Artists/Guest Curator's travel and accommodation	Curatorial Assistant
	Prepare press release Design company prepare invitations and promotional material	Communications/ Publicity teams

Year two (continued)		
Date	Aim	Who
August	Organise exhibition insurance	Curatorial/Legal teams
Week of 3rd September	Post exhibition launch invites Devise audience evaluation form Issue press release Invite representative from art press to the launch	Communications/ Publicity/ Exhibition teams
10th September	Arrival of catalogues, flyers, posters. Start online promotion (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/Blog)	Communications/ Publicity/ Curatorial teams
10th - 15th September	De-install previous exhibition	Art handling/ Technician teams
11th September	Book table at restaurant for Artist/Curator dinner after launch	Curatorial Assistant
12th September	Process artist/guest curators payments, organise cash for courier per-diems	Curatorial Assistant
14th September	Arrival of loans (acclimatisation in gallery space) Condition check	Curatorial/ Technical teams
17th - 27th September	Brief technical staff on installation requirements and layout Curator/Conservation staff unpack loans and conduct condition check Technicians install exhibition	Curatorial team

Final week open Friday 28th Sept		
Monday 24th September	Refreshments organised for the launch evening	Front of House team
Tuesday 25th September	Provide Front-of House team with the running order of the opening evening	Curatorial Assistant
Day of the launch	9.00am – brief Front of House staff on the exhibition – guided tour 9.30am - brief Front of House staff on the format of the evening, serving drinks, guiding visitors, which press are expected, times of speeches, artist dinner	Curatorial/ Communications/ Publicity teams
Friday 28th September	9.50am – brief Front of House staff on live Facebook/Instagram during launch evening, allocate staff	
3rd - October	Curator’s talk at the Gallery	Curatorial team
Mid-October	Arrangements made for installation photography	Education/ Curatorial teams
Duration of exhibition	Implementation of audience development – school groups/guided tours/ artists talks etc	Curatorial Assistant
End of exhibition		
14th -18th January	Dismantle exhibition Collection of loans by transportation company	Art handling/ Technical team
21st-23rd January	Collate visitor figures, visitor comments and write an end report to funders	Curatorial team

Budget Considerations

Below is a list of areas that you need to be aware of when budgeting for an exhibition.

It is important to note that this list is not exhaustible and each organisations scale of operation and budget may be different. Companies or individuals that you may outsource work to will also have different rates that need to be considered. It is important to carefully research and accurately anticipate costs, building in a contingency to ensure that the exhibition remains within budget.

For more information about managing project budgets see the [Transforming Future Museums: Project Management Toolkit](#).

Artist fees

There is often much debate over how much an artist should be paid. The Artists Information Company website (<https://www.a-n.co.uk/paying-artists>) has useful guidelines on how to calculate artists fees. Typically an artist should be paid a fee for any new work or site specific installation that is commissioned, screening fees for video/film works, daily installation fees and potentially Artist talk fees. In addition to these costs the gallery may be expected to provide in kind support and pay for their accommodation, travel and per diem.

Guest Curators fees

This may include but not be limited to:

- Research fees
- Exhibition fees
- Installation fees
- Guest speaker fees for public events

Loan fees

- Rental or administrative fee charged by the institutional lender of the artwork(s)
- Special permission or license fees (for public art)
- Copyright fees (for use of contextual photography)

Courier fees

- Flight costs
- Accommodation
- Daily per-diem (in the UK, a per diem is typically between £35-£50 a day, but each gallery is different)

Transportation

- Shipping or transportation
- Crating fees
- Customs costs (typically dealt with by the transportation company)

Installation

- Painting of gallery spaces
- Construction of walls, plinths and shelves
- Display cases (if not already sourced)
- Equipment hire
- Production costs of exhibition interpretation such as vinyl/panels

Exhibition Promotion

- Image reproduction fees for the catalogue
- Design and production of brochures, banners
- Design, printing and postal distribution of the exhibition opening invite
- Adverts in the art press
- Launch event/ Private View

Activity

What are the benefits of temporary exhibitions?

Your museum has a gap in the calendar and is looking to produce a temporary collection in the next coming months.

Refer to the Temporary exhibitions tool on the following page.

Consider and answer these guiding questions:

1. What could the exhibition be about?

Is it to provide a platform for emerging artists / try something not traditionally done by the museum?

2. How it could be used to generate income?

Events / holidays / anniversaries

3. How it could bring in new audiences into your museum?

Who are you currently not attracting to your museum – children, elderly, disabled?

4. Could it be used to cater to various minority groups in your community?

How would it achieve this?

5. How might you include new acquisitions or pieces currently in storage?

Museum Interpretation refers to all the ways in which information is communicated and sign-posted to help visitors navigate the exhibition space.

There has been much debate within the sector about interpretation materials and methods. In 1966, Susan Sontag published a collection of essays entitled *Against Interpretation*. Sontag argues that the contemporary approach to aesthetics places the emphasis on the intellect rather than the spiritual importance of art. She argues that, contemporary critics were often taking art's transcendental power for granted, focusing instead on intellectually constructed abstractions like "form" and "content".

In 2015, Nicolas Serota, Director of Tate Modern said: ***"If you start to try to pin down, define, analyse in words the work, it can often make it more difficult to realise the experience in another form. Some artists are happy to give clues but not explanations because they don't want the works to be read literally. Sometime the clue is in the title, but not always"***.

When planning your interpretation there are several areas to consider:

- How do you label paintings and artefacts in museums?
- What should a label say?
- Should it offer a narrative, historical context or ask questions?
- Should there be labelling at all?

Creating effective interpretation requires you to:

- Identify your objective(s)
- Understand your audience
- Pinpoint the main message you wish to communicate
- Determine which stories you want to tell
- Consider Accessibility
- Evaluate previous or existing interpretation and incorporate the learning into your current and future project(s)
- Ensure the design is sensitive to the considerations listed above

Your objectives

To establish your objectives perhaps ask yourself and your team the following:

- What is it that you want your exhibition to achieve?
- How can your interpretation address this?
- What kind of information do you want your visitors to take away?
- How can you help your visitors make sense of complex arguments?
- How will your visitor feel during the visit?
- What can you do to help your visitor think creatively?

Your audience

Picture your audience and begin to consider their specific needs. Are they mainly young families, retired, school children, university students, or young couples? For example, young families may want to see lots of interactive elements and hands-on object related activities. The older generation may prefer their interpretation to be in the form of text panels and low-tech alternatives. Assess how your visitors move around

the museum space and how much time they spend there. This information can be gathered by establishing focus groups, audience survey forms and visitor tracking. The information collected will help you determine the tone of text and where best to place different methods of interpretation.

For more information, visit the [Transforming Future Museums: Audience Development toolkit](#) or read about the Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Culture Segments <https://mhminsight.com/articles/culture-segments-1179>.

The main message

Good interpretation takes advantage of how people best absorb information and learn. For instance, it is recognised that most visitors tend to forget facts and figures almost immediately but do retain broad information connected to a theme. It is important not to overwhelm the visitor but focus on what it is that you want them to remember.

Telling stories

Often visitors can sometime better connect to hearing about people rather than about objects or abstract ideas and the storytelling approach can be a useful tool in engaging your audience. These stories usually have a linear flow, starting from the introduction, leading to the central part in which actions take place, and finally a revelation or resolution at its end.

Accessibility

While Museums will have their own Accessibility Policy, and will adhere to this, current best practice recommends that labels should be pitched at a reading age of 12 years old and should not be too academic. Every panel should have a clear title - one that grabs your visitor's attention and give an indication of what is to follow. Consider font size - typically it should be 12-14 point but should be larger if the label is placed at the back of a display case. Use a font that is plain and easy to read such as Calibri, or Arial. Ideally object labels should be no longer than 30 words and introductory panels no more than 250 words.

For more information about access, visit:

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=8352>

Evaluation

How will you know that your interpretation is working?
What changes might need to be made and how can you measure whether these changes have been successful?
Evaluating your exhibition can help you determine what changes you actively need to make but will also inform your planning for the future.

Evaluation can be undertaken in a number of ways:

- Pre-test your ideas - can you pilot activity on a small scale?
- Visitor Figure Counts - are they higher or lower than average?
- Observation of visitor behaviour - how long do people look at each display? What route do they take around the space?
- Formal Visitor Surveys - can these be carried out in the exhibition or after the visitor has left and had time to reflect? Depending on resources, can these be face to face interviews, paper forms or through a digital format?

Choose the method that best measures the success of your interpretation according to your initial objectives. For example, if you want your visitors to spend longer in the gallery, observe them and keep a record of what attracts them and keeps their attention.

Current Practice

There are many different forms interpretation can take. Visit the Museums Association website for a comprehensive overview of the variety of options <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/interpretation>

Hidden Labels – These are unobtrusive and work well within a traditional room setting where you don't want a bright white A1 panel on show. The National Trust, in their country houses, quite often put their introductory panels in old wooden frames for this reason. They sometimes place labels in slightly ajar drawers so they are unobtrusive. You can also make use of existing labels that accompany archaeological finds.

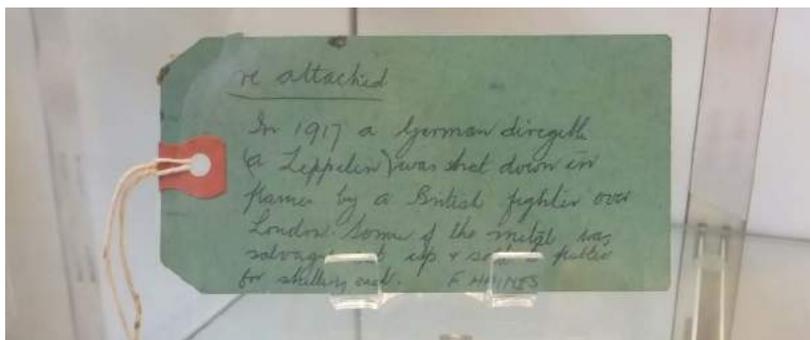


Image credit: Hidden Label ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

Quotes – The use of quotes strategically placed in a display can interpret themes in a unique and moving way. They can provide an additional layer of context for an object or hang.

Talking Labels – In 2005, Bury Art Museum refurbished its art and museum spaces. This gave the curators the opportunity to reassess the interpretation approaches they had been taking and consider how they could improve them. The curators found that people tended to skim read the labels and were much more receptive when a member of staff approached them and talked to them. For this reason, 'Talking Labels' were introduced. Instead of physical labels, gallery staff were available to speak to visitors that wanted to know more about the paintings on display.



Image credit: Hidden Label ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

Different Voices – Asking your audience to produce interpretation and labels can sometimes improve the level of local engagement with an exhibition. Curators at Bury Art Museum invited people who had lived and worked at a local historic square to come forward and talk about the objects in the museum that had been collected during the sites history. Their memories and feelings became the labels that accompanied the objects in the exhibition ‘Union Square’. This approach helped the museum’s visitors to form a stronger and more intimate connection to the objects displayed.



Image credit: *Different voices* ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

Digital Labels – Digital options can be used for labeling and interpretation material. They not only give your visitors a different way to access information but can also change the aesthetic of your space and provide curators with the opportunity to extend interpretation. Digital interpretation can include: QR codes, augmented reality labels and interactive tablets. The methods and approach to take should take into consideration your original objective, your audience needs, the narrative or theme, accessibility and what you may have learnt from using digital interpretation in the past.

Bristol Museum have been careful in their approach to using digital to improve their object labels. Rather than consistently using the same approach for every exhibition, the most appropriate method of digital labelling is identified according to each project’s requirements.

For more information visit their website:

<http://www.labs.bristolmuseums.org.uk/digital-object-labels/>

Revisiting Collections – This innovative collections development methodology, developed by the Collections Trust in the UK, enabled the creation of user generated information, knowledge and interpretation. Museums and galleries are encouraged to open up collections and archives for scrutiny by community groups and external experts to build a new shared understanding of the meaning of the objects and records. It encourages inclusive access to the collections and engages the community.

<http://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/revisiting-collectionsdata-collection-form-templates/>





Activity

Consider your current labelling and information displays. Using the tool on the following page, how might you approach this differently and why?

This activity is about creating as many new ideas as possible to help you discover which style of interpretation will best suit your museum and visitors. Use the tool on the following page to help you. You may wish to complete this activity on a separate sheet of paper, or use sticky notes and other tools to help you.

1. Place the visitors you identified through the Persona activity at the top of the tool.
2. How would you refresh your labelling and information displays using each of these techniques? Note down a few words or make a simple drawing to describe what it would look like. Do these work for all of the personas you identified?
3. Develop three of your ideas further. How would people interact with the labels? What might the result of this be?

1. Choose which visitor personas you will focus on

2. How might you refresh labelling and information displays using each of these techniques?

Historical context	Talking labels	Hidden labels	Asks questions
Quotes	Audience led	Interactive	Something else

3. Develop three of your ideas further

Museum collections exist to be available for the advancement of knowledge, an aim that is achievable only if objects and artworks are made available for research, teaching, exhibition and loan. At the same time, it is essential to recognise that museums hold collections in trust for the public, and it should be their mission to make their collections as fully accessible as possible.

ICOM in its Code of Ethics, 2002 describes the role of a museum and access as *“a non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purpose of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment”*.

Access to museum collections is as much about providing physical accessibility as well as access to information. For the purpose of this toolkit we will concentrate on enabling access to information.

Museums have a duty to widen access and access museums should avoid discrimination on the basis of physical, sensory or intellectual ability, cultural origin, age or social status, and seek to be socially inclusive.

Interpretation that widens and increases access can take many forms:

- Exhibition introductory text panels and object labels
- Audio and sound guides
- Interactive displays
- Object handling and loans boxes
- Talking or hidden labels
- Guided tours
- Web access – collections databases, social media sites etc.
- Children’s dressing up areas
- Alternative formats: braille, dyslexia-friendly font and large print
- Information available in various languages

Using a variety of interpretive methods it is possible to extend your engagement with a broader and diverse range of audiences, cater to different learning needs and produce a more satisfying visitor experience.

Case study

House of Memories, National Museums Liverpool and Bury Art Museum

The house of Memories project provides access to visitors who suffer from dementia

There are around 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK and this figure is set to rise as the population ages, soaring to 1.7 million by 2050. There is good scientific evidence for the positive effects of the arts on the physical and mental health of people living with dementia. Since 2012 Bury Art Museum has developed a portfolio of projects, activities and resources that are specifically created for people living with the condition.

In 2013 Bury Art Museum began to work in partnership with the National Museums Liverpool to deliver the House of Memories programme which is a pioneering dementia awareness training programme, that provides the health & social care workforce with practical skills and resources to support people to live well with dementia. Bury ran a training day in partnership with National Museums

Liverpool which was attended by 100 delegates. The delegates came from a range of organisations across the North West of England, primarily from the health and social care sectors but also from the voluntary sector and the museums sector. The training day raised awareness of the potential for cultural organisations to contribute to the wellbeing of those living with dementia.

Early in 2014, the project employed artist Helena Tomlin to work with residents and staff at a Care Home in Bury called Spurr House. Helena together with the residents worked on a creative, multi-sensory project exploring art making, memory and imagination. During the sessions, the group shared stories and 'evocative' objects which inspired them to make drawings, paintings, prints and to experiment with clay. These art works became the basis for the next step in the project – *The Museum of Us*.

The project was captured through photography and documented in a book, creating a lasting record of the time the group spent with each other. Selected artwork created by patients was displayed in the 'The Museum of Us', an exhibition which took place in a vacant shop unit in the local shopping centre.

As part of the House of Memories programme, a series of themed object loans boxes were created. Each box contained a range of objects that could stimulate and evoke memory and were loaned free of charge for use in care homes and centres. A local historian helped devise and acquire the content which was structured around the themes of Holidays, Local History and The 1950s.

To see evaluations of the project visit – <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learning/projects/houseof-memories/>



Image credit: House of memories Loans Box ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre



Image credit: Museum of Us, House of Memories exhibition ©Bury Art museum & Sculpture Centre

“...I have always enjoyed museums as an educational resource..I now have a heightened awareness of the value of museums as a resource in the area of dementia.”

“I think that (museums) are a valuable resource...in terms of the materials that people have available in collections...the knowledge that curators have and I think that’s a resource we could use much more of.”

You can find the project online by visiting
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

How would you start planning

It is important to consider creating an access policy; this document will help you focus on your organisations requirements and commitments.

Guidance on access policies can be found at the Collections Trust website <http://collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-management/collections-access/> and an example of a access policy in action can be seen at the National Museum of Wales website <https://museum.wales/corporate/collections-management/access/>

To inform and deliver on the content of your access policy, consider:

- Researching best practice in the field
- Consulting your visitors and users about their needs
- Working with organisations who can offer support for people with disabilities
- Making sure your staff are trained on equality and diversity, including disability awareness training

It is vital that museums and galleries consistently strive and commit to providing a level of access for their visitors which is appropriate for their needs, and which adheres to standards of best practice. An ongoing commitment will ensure museums and galleries remain relevant for the new and diverse contemporary audiences they attract.

Further reading and links to relevant projects which might inspire you.

Case Studies

Temporary Museum Exhibition Design

- **Revealing Hidden histories – Reading Museum** <http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/news/2013/jun/revealing-reading-history/>
- **Polari Mission** <http://jezdolan.com/polari> <http://www.polariapp.com/#about>

Adaptive Access

- **Vulnerable Adults – Story Box: Creative Cafe** <https://smallthings.org.uk/storybox-creative-cafe/>
- **House of Memories** <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learning/projects/house-of-memories/index.aspx>

Useful Links

- Preservation Equipment www.preservationequipment.com
- Conservation Resources www.conservation-resources.uk
- Collections Trust www.collectionstrust.org.uk
- Museums Association www.museumsassociation.org
- Museum Development North West
- www.museumdevelopmentnorthwest.wordpress.com
- Arts Council England www.artscouncil.org.uk
- Spectrum Standards in Collections Care www.collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum
- Conservation Studios www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/conservation
- Lancashire Conservation Studios www.lancashire.gov.uk
- AudioTours & Podcasts : Blackbox AV www.blackbox.co.uk
- Free QRcodes www.ForQRcode.com
- Random Words Exercise came from - Book – 'Cracking Creativity, The Secrets of Creative Genius', by Michael Michalko, 2001.

? Reflection and next steps

Three things I learned during this course

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

One thing which I was reminded of during this course

One thing which surprised me during this course

One key message I will share with colleagues

One action I will take tomorrow

Tomorrow I will _____

Three actions I will take in the future	
I will _____	To achieve this I will need _____
I will _____	To achieve this I will need _____
I will _____	To achieve this I will need _____



