



The Victoria and Albert Museum Photography Curators' Training Programme

Supported by the **ArtFund**

Background

Art photography collections are held at regional museums, libraries and archives across the country but often without specialist curatorial expertise. Peer support for curators working with photography collections is limited. There is currently no Subject Specialist Network for Photography, and no active planning, programming, research, information exchange, scholarship or training that is more formally coordinated between UK institutions. As a result, many photography collections tend to be 'dormant' and inaccessible to experts and audiences, and curators responsible for photography collections do not have access to the necessary staffing and financial resources, or knowledge and specialist skills to actively develop their collections.

With the support of 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.

Programme Aims

- To provide an unparalleled practical training opportunity in photograph curatorship in the UK to build expertise in the field and, specifically, to equip two curators with specialist knowledge of photography and ability to care for and develop photograph collections;
- To enable UK organisations to raise the public profile of their permanent collections of photographs and to improve public access, both physically and intellectually;
- To provide the opportunity for collaborative partnerships and lay the foundation for an active future UK photographs subject specialist network.

The Programme

The V&A will work with one regional museum for each of the two years. The partners will be chosen by open competition and both partners will be selected at the same time so they can participate in the development and delivery of the programme. Museums wishing to be considered should have a permanent collection of art photography and be able to identify a discrete project for the trainee curator to deliver which will benefit the collection, the museum and its audiences. This project will result in material outcomes for the regional partner which could include, but are not limited to, an exhibition, a refocus of the collecting policy, a publication or cataloguing of the collection. The project may be related to a specific theme, for

example, processes and techniques, British industry, British colonialism, Protest, Childhood, or Landscape.

The partners will work together to support the aims of the programme and the selected museums will be required to enter into a contract with the V&A regarding the delivery of the project, including confirmation of the museum's capacity to support the trainee, by providing a nominated support manager for the trainee, normally a section curator and agreeing a regular reporting process.

Once the partners are selected and project agreed, a trainee curatorial assistant will be recruited for the first year's partner. Participants will spend approximately six months in the Photographs section of the Word and Image Department at the V&A, with a V&A curator as mentor and six months at the partner museum working on the agreed project.

The V&A will support the curator/trainee in developing their curatorial skills through work with the V&A photography collection and via participation in relevant V&A training modules. The V&A mentor will assist the participant in defining and developing their placement museum project and provide mentoring support over the six months they deliver the project at the partner museum.

The Art Fund will provide the V&A with funding to employ the trainees for the duration of the project on a 12 month fixed term contract each and travel expenses to enable the trainee to work between the V&A and the regional partner. There will also be attendance at relevant conferences and visits to other important photographic collections.

Timescale

Partner selection:

Deadline for museums applications: **11 August 2014**

Panel meet to select regional partners: **18 August 2014**

Selected regional partners to attend selection panel for curatorial trainees: **late October 2014 or early November 2014**

Curatorial trainees' selection:

Trainee 1: based at the V&A **December 2014 to May/June 2015**

based at the regional partner **May/June 2015 to December 2015**

Trainee 2: based at the V&A **September 2015 to March 2016**

based at the regional partner **April 2016 to September 2016**

Contact

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