

# Toolkit for temporary exhibitions and permanent display

A toolkit inspired by the ITP+ Course *temporary exhibitions and permanent display*



Held at the British Museum, London

15 – 19 May 2017

## **International Training Programme (ITP) and ITP+ Courses**

### **The background**

In August 2016 the ITP team asked alumni for feedback on potential ITP+ Courses enabling the team to create an analysis of needs and develop courses that would best help our fellows' career development and support their institutions.

ITP+ Courses are 5-day workshops designed for fellows of the 6 week Summer Programme (253 as of Summer 2017) to apply for and participate in post fellowship. Courses are on selected themes which focus on specific parts of the Summer Programme. The Courses respond to alumni's stated areas of interest and development needs and helping to address identified challenges at their home institutions. Themes will change to reflect the demands and skills gaps of our alumni, contemporary issues and challenges in both the museum and wider cultural heritage sector and will be an opportunity for fellows of varying roles and responsibilities to participate.

### **ITP+ Courses**

The courses offer a series of seminars, creative workshops, hand-on sessions and practical working groups with colleagues from the British Museum. As part of the programmes there are also opportunities to visit current exhibitions and displays at the British Museum and other London and UK museums.

There are a maximum of ten places on the courses to enable productive discussions, breakout groups and project work in specific subject areas, with places awarded through an open and competitive application process.



## **Course briefs**

ITP+ Courses provide opportunities for further professional development; to reconnect with colleagues in the UK; the chance to meet fellows with similar interests from across different years of the ITP and serve to enhance the potential for future collaborations and the creation of subject specialist networks.

## ***Temporary exhibitions and permanent display***

In May 2017 the British Museum hosted the first ITP+ Course *temporary exhibitions and permanent display*.

Museum professionals from the British Museum (BM) and Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD) presented their work to 10 ITP Fellows. The course aimed to broaden participant's understanding of how to develop, manage and deliver temporary exhibitions and permanent displays.

### **Sessions included:**

Concept proposal and development

Consultation with community groups

Engaging with stakeholders

Fundraising

Interpretation and label writing

Managing expectations and risk

Marketing and press

Photography

Project Management

Sustainability

### **BM projects used to discuss these components included:**

#### **Permanent galleries**

- Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World
- Joseph E Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities
- photography in permanent galleries

#### **Temporary exhibitions**

- *Rodin, the art of ancient Greece*
- *The American Dream, pop to the present*

- *Desire, love identity: exploring LGBTQ*

The Course was attended and informed by fellows currently working in the following institutions:

- Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria
- Ditsong Museums of South Africa
- Hubei Provincial Museum, China
- Iranian Cultural Heritage Handcraft and Tourism Organisation
- Koc University Research Centre for Anatolian Civilisations, Turkey
- National Museums of Kenya
- Palace Museum, Beijing
- Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions, Cultures & Heritage in Roing, Arunachal, Pradesh, India
- Rohtas 2 Gallery, Pakistan
- Sudan National Museum
- The Asiatic Society of Mumbai

## ***Toolkit***

**Purpose:** Based on the sessions and discussions during the *temporary exhibitions and permanent display* ITP+ Course this document will guide you through handy hints and tips to consider when preparing for an exhibition or working on a permanent display.

# Contents Page

Project Scope Document

## Permanent Galleries:

New permanent galleries: processes

An introduction to the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World: visitor experience

Photography in permanent galleries: why?

Marketing the *American Dream, Pop to the present*: objectives and message

## Temporary exhibitions:

Exhibition concept proposal: questions to answer when planning a temporary exhibition

An introduction to the *Rodin, the art of ancient Greece*: what is your unique selling point?

*Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories*: inspiring visitors to find out more

Marketing new permanent galleries: objectives and message

## Think about:

Fundraising: getting donors on board

Interpretation: family audiences

Public Programmes: Adult Programmes

Visitor insights: qualitative research methods

## ***Project presentations and the project scope documents***

**Context:** ITP+ fellows filled in a project scope document before and after the course to help them discover where their project required more thought and detail and how the course could assist them with this.

The project scope document is an excellent way of starting a project as it guides you through what ought to be considered and ultimately becomes a checklist as you progress through your project. The document can also be referred to throughout your project to remind you of what your main aims and objectives are.

### **Project scope template**

<b>Working title</b> <i>Don't worry if the title is not final; it can change in the future.</i>	
<b>Project scope</b> <i>Create a project outline that briefly explains your plans.</i>	
<b>Themes and topics</b> <i>Outline what the exhibition/gallery will focus on and break it down into themes with a short explanation of each.</i>	
<b>Aims and objectives</b> <i>What is the purpose of the project? What do you hope to achieve?</i>	
<b>Mission and values</b> <i>Proposals should fit within your institution's mission and values. How and why does your project do this?</i>	
<b>Exhibition Contents</b> <i>What objects will be on display and in</i>	

<i>what context</i>	
<b>Target audience</b> <i>Who are the people you want to attract to your institution - locals, tourists, children, Families? how will the exhibition do this?</i>	
<b>Community involvement opportunities</b> <i>Does the exhibition encourage community involvement? Think about the development process, the installation or special events?</i>	
<b>Supporting Programmes</b> <i>Think about the programming that can support the project? Who will present these events? Does the project support the schools programme?</i>	
<b>Retail opportunities</b> <i>Is there potential for income generation?</i>	
<b>Team structure &amp; Processes</b> <i>Who will you work with on this project?</i>	
<b>Resources</b> <i>People/space/time/equipment/furniture? What additional materials will need to be installed, acquired, or built to</i>	

<p><i>support the exhibition? This could include pedestals, vitrines and technical needs such as projectors or sound system. Potential funding</i></p>	
<p><b>Assumptions</b>  <i>What needs to happen or be in place for your project to be successful?</i></p>	
<p><b>Timescale</b>  <i>List your goals and milestones</i></p>	
<p><b>Benefits, challenges and risks</b></p>	
<p><b>Measuring success</b>  <i>What will success look like and how will it be measured?  What will be your evaluation method?</i></p>	
<p><b>Outputs, Outcomes &amp; legacy</b></p>	
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	
<p><b>Supporting material</b>  <i>Work samples/team biographies</i></p>	
<p><b>Note and questions</b>  <i>Any additional comments or questions that arise and are not include above</i></p>	



## Permanent Galleries: New permanent galleries

### Handy hints and tips: Permanent gallery process

**Context:** Creating a new permanent gallery is an amazing opportunity for museum staff to remember the lessons learnt from previous projects and to implement change. Museum staff must consider that the new gallery will indefinitely remain and should therefore ensure that what they create is relevant but will also stand the test of time.

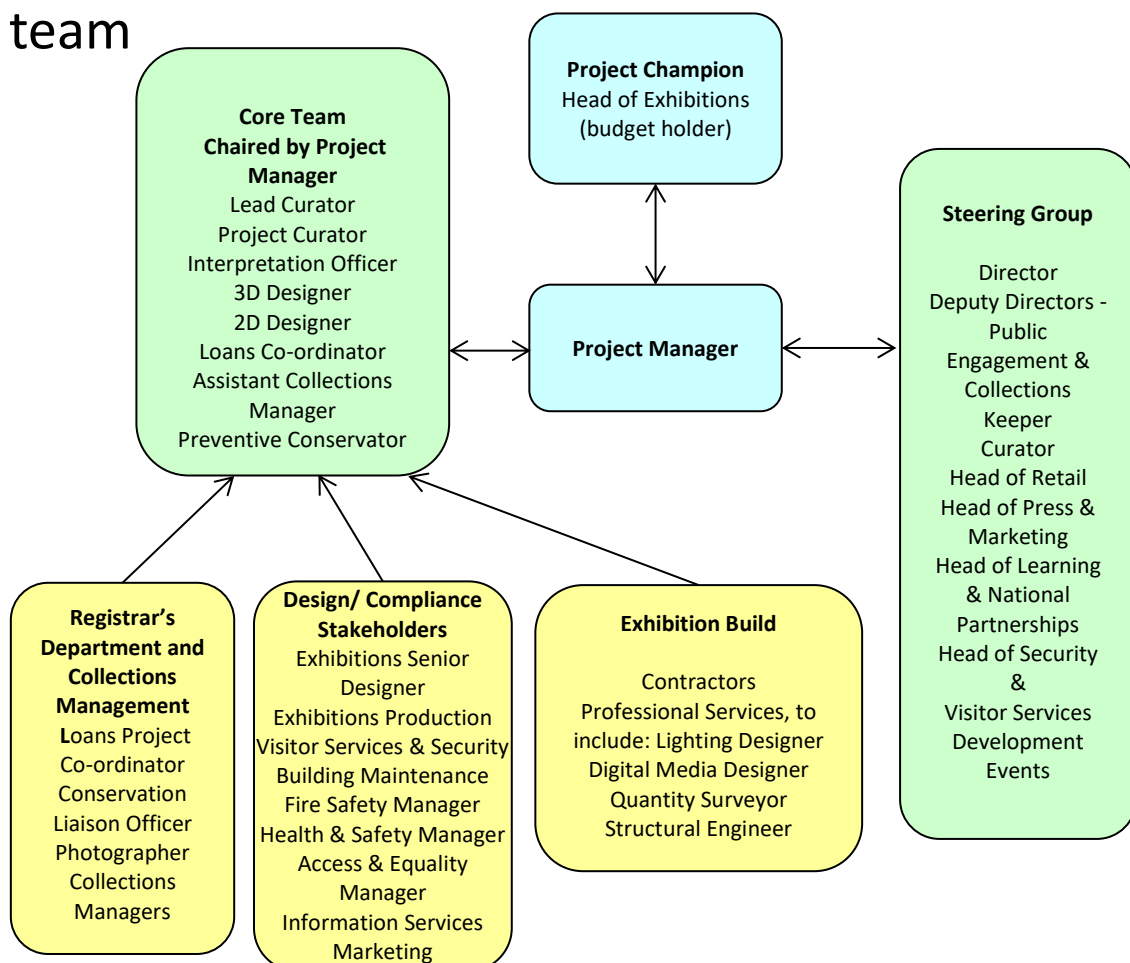
#### What should museum staff think about in the initial stages?

##### Design brief:

To guarantee all of the components and project team members which / who contribute to a new permanent gallery will contribute to one cohesive gallery, guidelines on the following subjects should be adhered to by the gallery designers:

- Building
- Visitors
- The use of digital media
- Content (e.g. thematic, chronological, dynastic, regional?)
- Interpretive approach and gateway objects (see next page)

## The project team

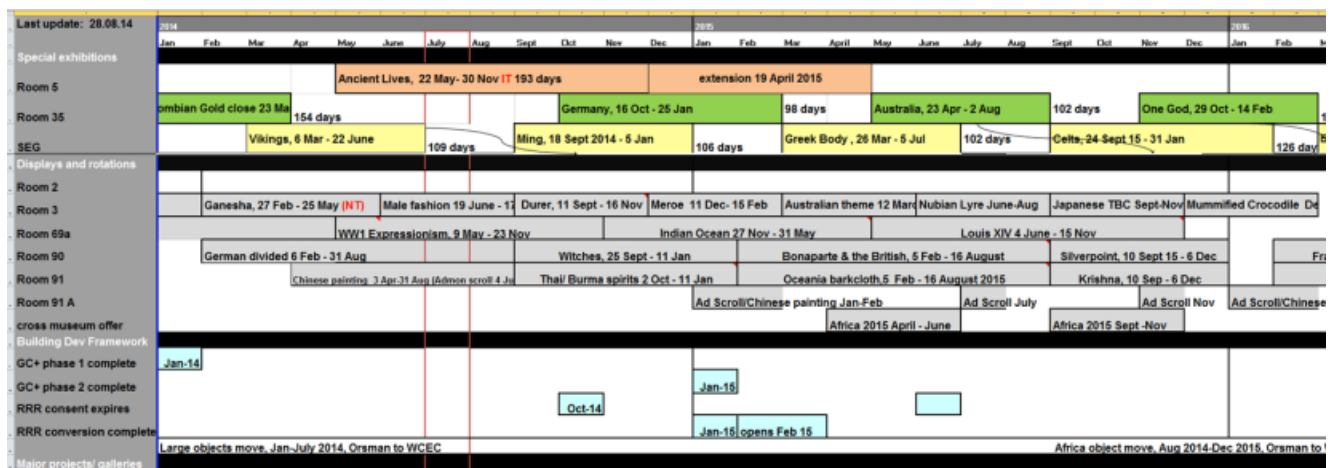


## Process:

Think about the phases of your project and the logical order they should be started and completed in. See the bullet points below for ideas. Which points reflect your work and which ones would you replace? What would you replace them with?

- Curatorial proposal
- Approval by senior management
- Funding
- Design Brief made public
- Design proposals submitted and reviewed
- Design Team appointed
- Galleries cleared
- Basic infrastructure
- Consultations
- Concept Design Phase
- Detailed Design Phase
- Infrastructure prepared / conservation
- Interpretive content generation
- Installation
- Opening

**Are you designing a new permanent gallery? Have you created a set of guidelines from which the entire project will unfold? How big is your new gallery and how much time do you think each phase will take? Would a Gantt chart (see below) help to structure your project?**



## **Permanent Galleries: An introduction to the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World**

### **Handy hints and tips: Visitor experience**

#### **Context:**

The British Museum is currently undertaking a massive project: a radical redisplay of the Islamic world collection. The new *Albukhary Foundation Galleries of the Islamic World* will tell the story of diverse cultures across a vast geographic region from Nigeria to China. The cultural and religious plurality of this vast region will be explored and celebrated through exhibits representing archaeology to contemporary art, and dating from the 7th century up to the present day.

As a result of this redisplay the museum was able to reassess what themes should be explored and what parts of the collection could be displayed. How to present objects which create a meaningful experience for any type of visitor has informed the redevelopment of this permanent gallery space. Below are some of the ways in which the new Albukhary Foundation Galleries of the Islamic World will tackle this issue...

#### **What visitor outcomes should a permanent gallery generate?**

##### **Visitors should have:**

- Visited an impressive, inspiring and coherent object-focussed display
- Engaged with at least a small number of the most important objects
- Visited a display that has relevance to their own experience and the world today
- Have made connections between cultures
- Have been encouraged to question their preconceptions and to have discovered something new
- Be inspired to share the experience of their visit to these galleries with their friends and family through social media and other channels
- Be inspired to find out more about the cultures of the broader Islamic world

#### **How?**

##### **Gateway objects**

Gateway objects are starting points for visitors in a gallery because they draw a visitor in, are used to introduce contextual information on a topic and are spread out across a gallery. Should a visitor only look at the gateway objects and accompanying text in a gallery, they will gain an overview of the main story & themes and they will be introduced to other objects.

Interpreting gallery spaces in this way attempts to meet the needs of the majority of visitors who are browsers (70%). Browsers stop at 2 or 3 objects per gallery and their museum visit lasts 2 – 3 hours. Visitors are object focused as less than 10% stop to read panels in galleries.

#### **To encourage visitors to get the most out of their visit gateway objects should possess four qualities:**

- i. intrinsically attractive
- ii. an intellectual gateway into a key theme or story

- iii. an important object in the collection
- iv. ideally, iconic to visitors



How long do visitors spend in your institution? How long do they linger in each gallery?  
How many objects do they stop to look at in each gallery? Which objects in your collection  
have the qualities of a gateway object? Can you redisplay them as gateway objects?

## **Permanent Galleries: Photography in permanent galleries**

### **Handy hints and tips: why?**

During the ITP+ Course fellows spent time with the British Museum's Chief Photographer looking at the photography displayed in the BM's permanent galleries. The mixture of old and new galleries presented a variety of types and standards of photography enabling the group to discuss what the purpose of photography in a permanent gallery is and therefore what makes a good photograph.



**In discussions with the Chief Photographer the group decided that museum professionals including photography in a permanent gallery should consider:**

How a photograph can help bring an object to life...

- What was the object used for?
- How was the object used?
- Where was the object used – specific location and which country?
- Where was the object found?

**Taking photographs of these scenarios puts an object into context for visitors:**

- Taking a picture of an object in use quickly engages the visitor in an object that may not be relatable to them if they have never seen it before



- Taking a picture of the place that an object comes allows visitors who may not have travelled to imagine a story behind the object
- Taking a picture of where and how objects were discovered allows visitors to understand the history of the object and the work of a museum e.g. archaeological digs, restoration, conservation...

**Use of images can also help to fill gaps in your institution's collection.**

**Before taking a photograph or asking a colleague to take photography consider the following:**

- Quality – how large will the image be printed
- Why are you taking the photograph and therefore what should the photograph capture?
- Be creative, capture an image that will interest the visitor

**Do you use photography in the permanent galleries of your institution? If yes, what purpose does it serve? If no, do you think photography could improve displays and visitor experience?**



## Permanent Galleries: Marketing the American Dream, Pop to the present

### Handy hints and tips: Objectives and Message

**Context:** The UK's first major exhibition to chart modern and contemporary American printmaking. The exhibition explored the creativity of a medium that flourished through some of the most dynamic and turbulent years in US history and that accompanied a period when its wealth, power and cultural influence had never been greater.



### Objectives

- To generate excitement, interest and a sense of scale for the exhibition and encourage advance ticket sales
- To attract new target audiences and re-engage audiences that have visited previous British Museum exhibitions
- To highlight the support of the exhibition sponsor Morgan Stanley and secondary supporter the Terra Foundation for American art
- To encourage engagement with the related events programme
- To encourage visitors to continue their relationship with the Museum via social media, emails and future online and venue visitation
- To support the promotion of Membership and related retail and catering activities e.g. restaurant menu, publication

### Messages

- This major exhibition is a must-see for spring 2017.
- Advance booking is recommended. Members and under 16s go free.

- The British Museum has an outstanding collection of modern and contemporary prints. This exhibition will include many never exhibited before, new acquisitions, and incredible loans from around the world.
- With a new President being elected, America is in the world's spotlight. London's museums and galleries are reflecting on American art and identity, and the British Museum is best placed to explore the social and political context of American art from the last 50 years.
- The exhibition is sponsored by Morgan Stanley.
- Additional support provided by the Terra Foundation.



Follow the link below to see the techniques used by the marketing department to meet the objectives above. Notice the colour scheme, acknowledgement of the sponsor, twitter handle, the link to become a member of the British Museum, exhibition reviews (punchy quotes), video, text, the option to buy the exhibition book...

<http://americandreamexhibition.org/>

**Who is your temporary exhibition audience? Are they aware of your upcoming exhibition? What will your audience learn? Why is your exhibition relevant? Do you have a social media strategy? Are your sponsors visible? How are the objectives and messages above different to those which the marketing team implement for new permanent galleries?**



## Temporary exhibitions: Exhibition concept proposal

### Handy hints and tips: Questions to answer when planning a temporary exhibition

**Context:** In museums where there is competition to produce the next exhibition, concept proposal forms are submitted for selection. These forms can be useful to anyone trying to put their vision on paper. At the British Museum, proposals are requested to be no longer than 3 pages (font size 11) using the table below.

<b>Working title of exhibition</b>	
<b>Proposer</b>	
<b>Date of Proposal</b>	

<b>Idea conception</b> (Does this idea come from an existing research project? From the Bloomsbury or UK partnership programmes?)
<b>Outline of idea</b> (scale of project, main objectives)
<b>Narrative and structure</b> (brief overarching themes, suggested section of exhibition)
<b>Objects</b> (department collections, quality, variety and scale, touring limitations)
<b>Audiences and appeal</b> (academic? Populist? Appealing to particular international regions? Has interest been expressed by specific organisations? Have there been previous exhibitions of a similar subject matter)
<b>Timing</b> (how long would this exhibition take to develop? For example how long would it take to generate an object list?)
<b>Opportunities and risks</b> (Financial; advocacy; tie to other programmes/ museum strategies; international research; political climate, restitution etc.)
<b>Other benefits</b> (ideas on programme, publications, other product, funding, legacy etc)
<b>Object images</b> (5-10 images of star pieces, stating their significance, fit to project etc)

**Have a go at writing your ideas down using the table above. Think about your key objects and messages and how they speak to each other to structure your exhibition. Are there any gaps in your proposal? Which colleagues and departments do you need or want to work with?**

**Temporary exhibitions:** An introduction to *Rodin, the art of ancient Greece*

**Handy hints and tips:** What is your unique selling point?

**Context:** Rodin at the British Museum is a temporary exhibition which will be displayed at the British Museum from 26 April– 29 July 2018 in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery. The exhibition is curated by a Curator in the department of Greece and Rome.

**Why this exhibition at the British Museum?**

**The British Museum connection:**

- Rodin was fascinated by Greek art, particularly the Parthenon Sculptures, displayed at the British Museum
- From 1881 onwards, Rodin was a regular visitor to the British Museum and took inspiration from its collections.
- New narrative built around Rodin's visit to London in 1881.

**International exhibition:**

- Unique collaboration between British Museum and Musée Rodin in Paris.
- 80% loan works, 20% star British Museum works, bringing new objects to visitors

**Big space for a big exhibition:**

- 150 objects to be displayed within the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery (1,100 m<sup>2</sup>)
- Diverse range, from monumental sculptures to delicate works on paper
- Promotes new understandings of a colossus in the history of art.



**Do you have ideas or plans for a temporary exhibition? What is unique about your exhibition? Why should people visit your exhibition?**

**Temporary exhibitions:** Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories

**Handy hints and tips:** Inspiring visitors to find out more

**Context:** To mark 50 years since the Sexual Offences Act was passed (a law that partially decriminalised homosexuality in England and Wales) the British Museum created the temporary exhibition *Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories*. This display offers glimpses into LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer) histories, experiences and lives by examining objects from around the world, covering ancient civilisations right up to today.

As a result of centuries of misrepresented and overlooked LGBTQ histories a trail offers visitors the opportunity to reinterpret objects throughout the permanent galleries.

**Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories**

11 May – 15 October 2017

ASSUME NOTHING

Free trail

**Trail**

Explore objects that highlight LGBTQ histories at the British Museum. Look out for the trail stickers and badge.

Join in online  
#LGBTQ\_BM

**Key**

- Room number
- East stairs

**Trail items:**

- 1 Greek and Roman life: Athenian wine cup and amphora about 540–480 BC
- 2 Roman Empire: Busts of Hadrian and Antinous about AD 117–138
- 3 Roman Empire: The Warren Cup about AD 10
- 4 Egyptian life and death: Stela of Hor and Suty about 1375 BC
- 5 Mesopotamia 6000–1500 BC: Queen of the Night 1800–1700 BC
- 6 Mesopotamia 6000–1500 BC: Epic of Gilgamesh 1800–1600 BC
- 7 Japan: Japanese woodblock prints 1700s–1800s (from 19 July onwards)
- 8 Europe 1800–1900: The Ladies of Llangollen: chocolate cups and saucers 1760–1800
- 9 Medieval Europe 1050–1500: Print of St Sebastian 1470–1475
- 10 Enlightenment: Maori treasure box 1750–1800
- 11 Enlightenment: Statue of Ganymede AD 100–200
- 12 East stairs, Ground floor (between Room 1 and Room 27): Maya stela AD 730
- 13 Africa: Ndomo mask 19th century

This trail is based on Richard B Parkinson's book *A Little Gay History – Desire and Diversity Across the World*.

Campaign badges, 1970s to mid-1990s.

**Purpose:** By offering a free trail of the permanent galleries at the end of a temporary exhibition, visitors can use their new outlook to interpret other parts of the collection and expand their knowledge. By using resources readily available in your institution, this strategy is financially feasible and practical. This is a great example of how a small temporary exhibition can encourage visitors to explore a museum's permanent galleries.

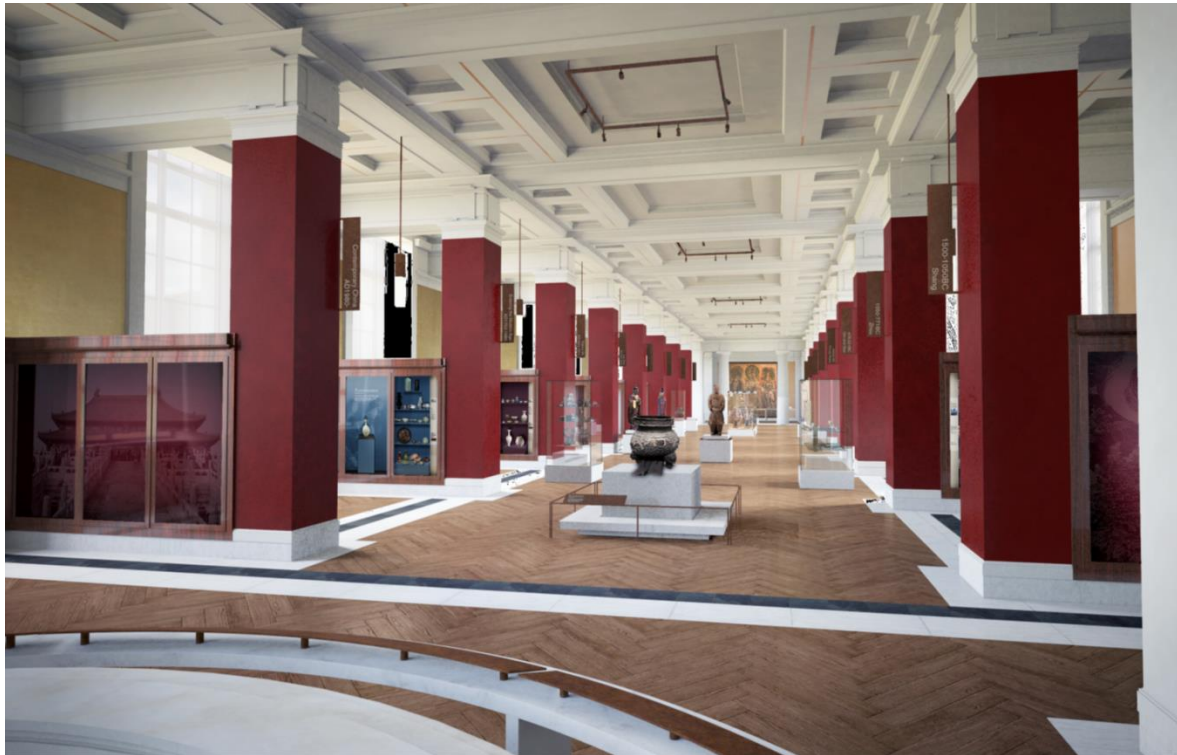
Suggesting a book to read on the trail and incorporating exhibition and trail features in an [online exhibition](#) encourages visitors to continue their learning after their visit, resulting in a more lasting and meaningful experience.

**How can your temporary exhibitions make a lasting impact? Are there any parts of your permanent collection which lend themselves to current temporary exhibitions? How will you ensure that future visitors are made aware of links between temporary exhibitions and permanent displays?**

## **Temporary exhibitions: Marketing new permanent galleries**

### **Handy hints and tips: Objectives and Message**

**Context:** The Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia will open November 2017. The Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World will open in October 2018.



#### **Objectives**

- To attract visitors to experience the newly refurbished galleries to explore the history and culture of China and South Asia and the Islamic world.
- To encourage visitors to convert on site as well as attracting new audiences to the Museum to visit these collections.
- To raise public awareness of the Museum's free offer and permanent collection and to demonstrate the breadth of collection.
- To encourage visitors to attend related events.
- To encourage visitors to continue their relationship with the Museum via social media, e-news etc. as well as through future online and venue visits.
- To fulfil sponsorship contract commitments.

#### **Message**

- 2017 and 2018 will see significant gallery space reopen to the public after major refurbishments
- The British Museum has a world-class collection of objects from around the world, which tell the story of human history. Together these galleries will include objects which explore the story of these cultures from the ancient past to today.
- The galleries will be refreshed and will feature new key objects and interpretation.

- The British Museum is free.

**Whether or not your galleries are new, how do you attract visitors to see your permanent collection? What unique selling point does your museum have and do you promote this? Are your visitors aware what events you offer? Is your institution on social media and is it used to its full potential? What is the message and aims of your permanent galleries? How are the objectives and messages above different to those which the marketing team implement for temporary exhibitions?**

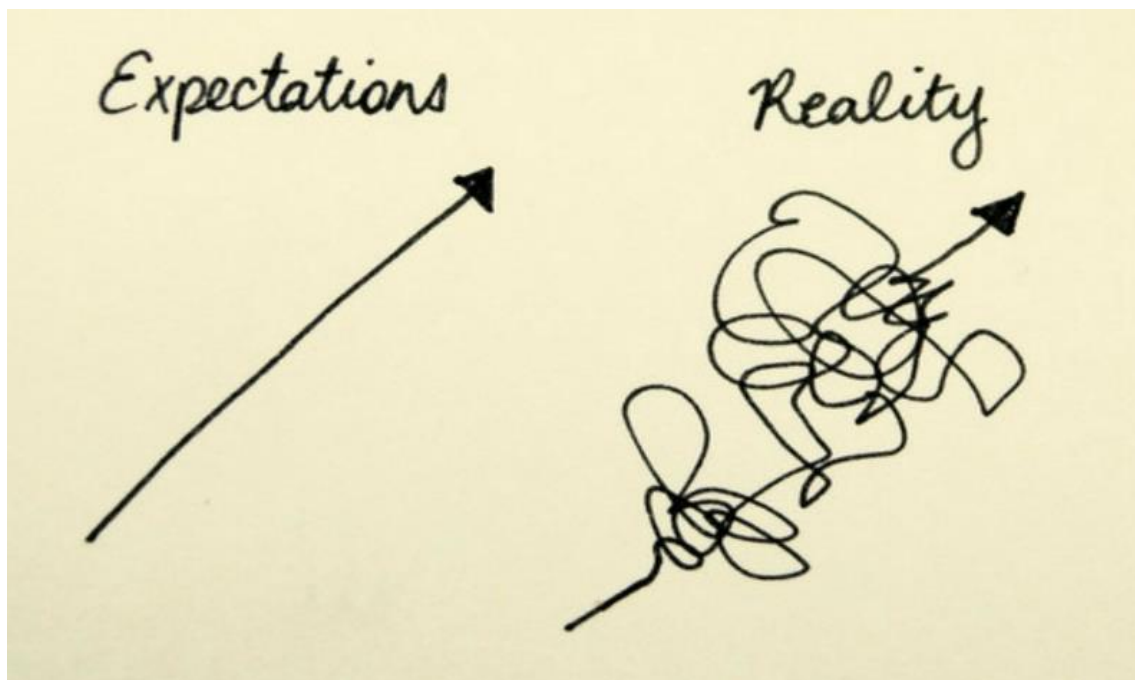
## **Think about:** Fundraising

### **Handy hints and tips:** Getting donors on board

**Context:** The fundraising team at the British Museum presented ITP+ fellows with a fundraising scenario. Comparing bringing a museum donor on board to having a relationship she demonstrated to fellows that although people make decisions on emotion, you must be logical in your attempts to gain funding for your institution.

#### **Plan of action: how to bring donors on board**

1. Identification: put your institution in the market to acquire a donor by expanding your network
2. Cultivating: get to know your new network by having phone calls, meet for coffee, provide them with private views, behind the scenes tours and curator's talks.
3. Solicitation: Based on what you have found out about people within your network, make a proposal which matches the needs of your potential donor



#### **The reality**

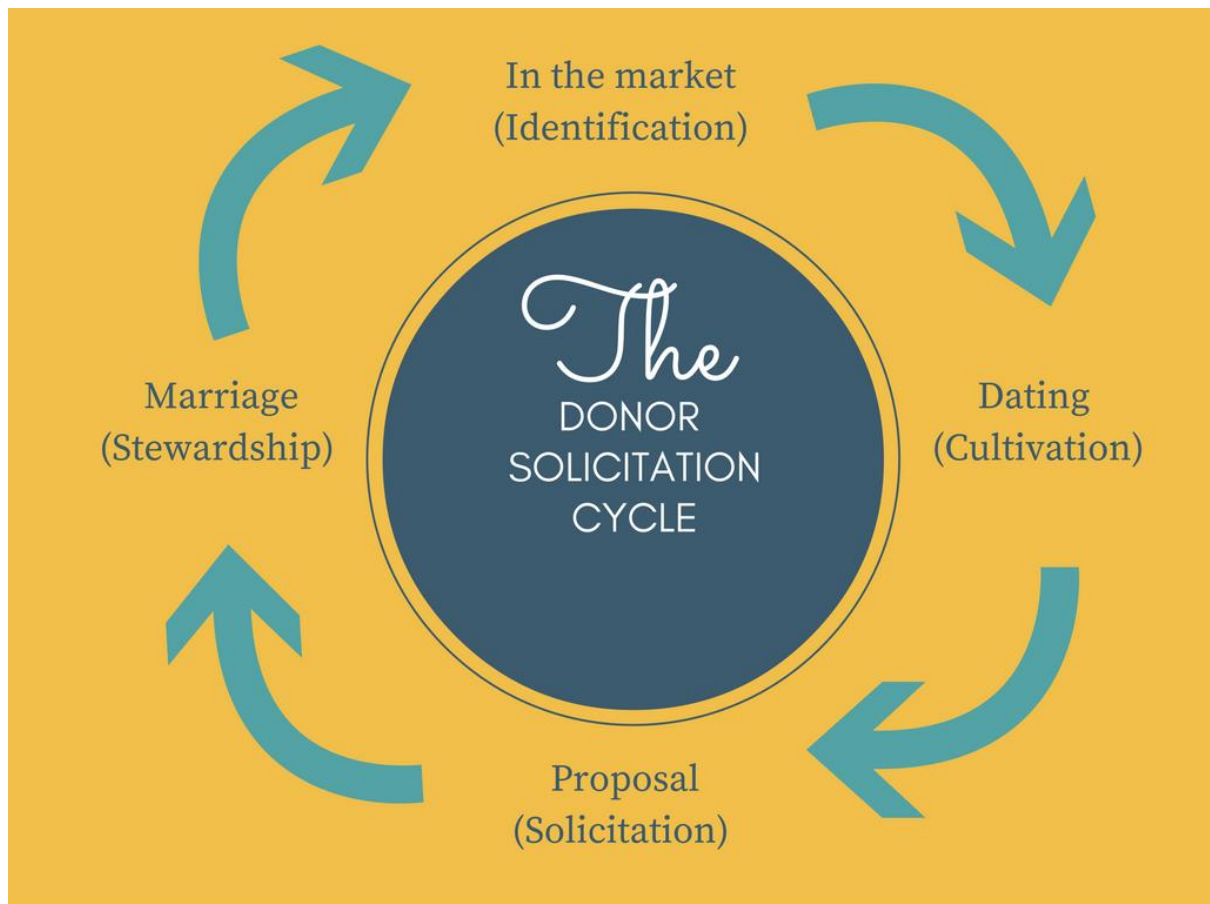
- This entire process can take between 12 – 18 months
- On average of the 13 people you cultivate (point 2) only 1 will donate
- Ensure that you have your message ready at all times
- Create a project proposal which is personal, logistical and specific
- Establish policies so that museum staff know what behaviour is and is not acceptable from a donor and toward a donor

#### **If you are successful continue the relationship**

- Give a letter of thanks
- Give a hand written card
- Send invitations to openings and museum events
- Provide the donor with quarterly updates about your institution

### Remember

- Interests change – make sure you keep up to date with your donors interests



**Does your institution have a network of donors? If yes, how do you maintain your relationship with them? Do you understand their interests? If no, who could you approach? Could you put time into long term relationships in order to get donors on board?**



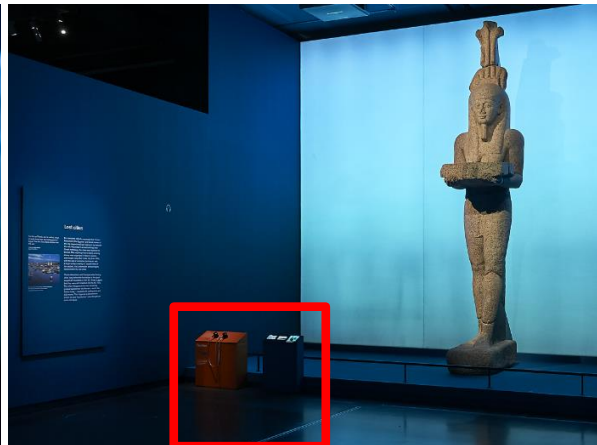
**Think about:** Interpretation

**Handy hints and tips:** Family audiences

**Context:** Over one quarter (28%) of British Museum visitors are families. The biggest age category is 8-11 years (36%). As a result in 2015 labels written for families in temporary exhibitions were developed and evaluated. For permanent galleries the Museum began offering events, activity packs, digital family guide and a young members club.

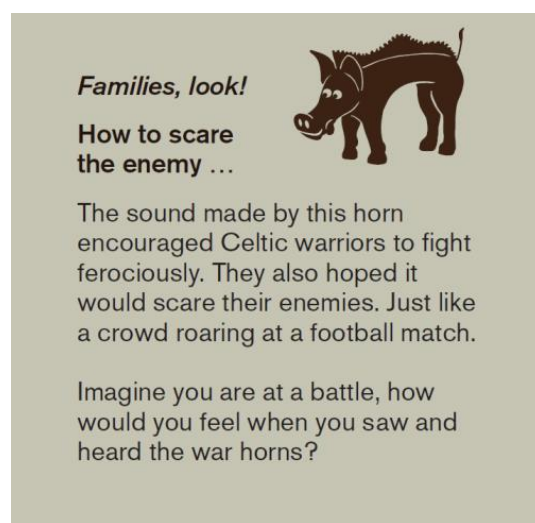
### How to engage families

Position panels aimed at families around your gallery space.



### Labels

- should be in a visible place
- should be colourful
- should have a recognisable picture for families to follow around a gallery or exhibition space



### The hidden spectrum of colours

Don't let appearances deceive you – this artwork is all about colour. The colouring book is made up of images of South Africa. Each page has a title about colour, which shows the dangers of using colours to classify people.

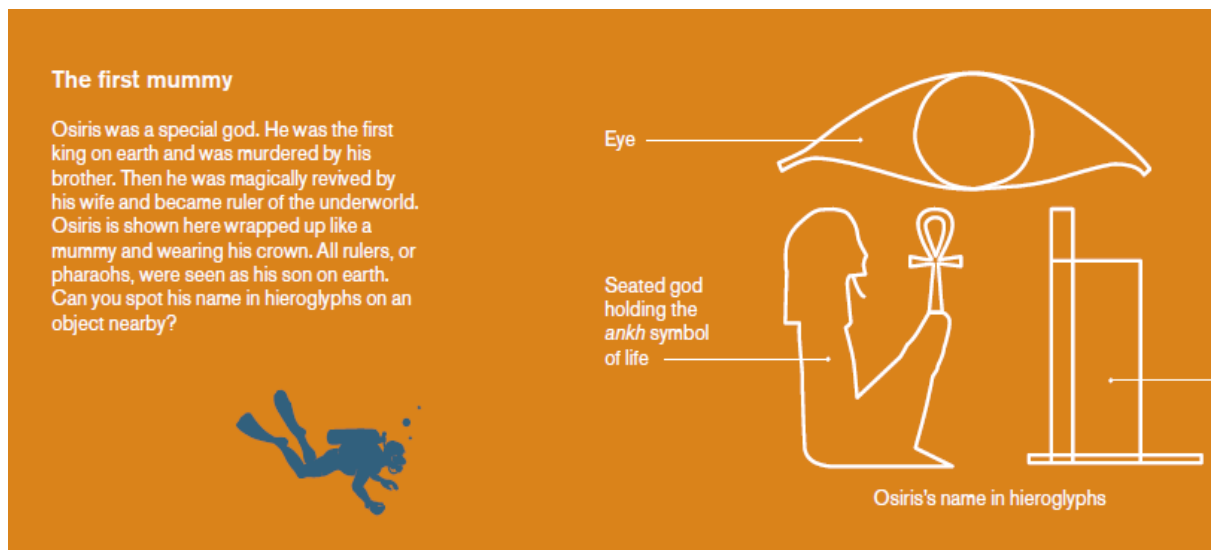
**Can you find the artist's ID card in this artwork?**

### Text on labels

- should be short, 40 words maximum



- should be in a large font
- should have a target age group and write for that age group across all labels



### Remember:

The most popular labels are...

- tactile or experiential (touch, listen, smell)
- invite exploration (look closely)
- ask visitors to imagine...



**Are family audiences important to your institution? Could you incorporate panels in your galleries and temporary exhibitions for children to follow? What pictures and symbols could you use to engage this audience?**

## **Think about:** Public Programmes

## **Handy hints and tips:** Adult programmes

**Context:** The British Museum runs adult programmes to showcase the Museum's work to the wider world, to engage with the broadest definition of the public, to support a culture of learning, for advocacy and for reputation. The programme works to engage audiences with the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions.

### **What activities and events could make up Adult programmes at your institution?**

- Gallery talks (approximately 45 mins)

Talks which explore the collection, given by staff or guest speakers. At the British Museum these talks are held at lunch time to attract the most amount of people. Often members of staff go to these talks too.

- Lectures
- Discussions
- Study sessions / days
- Workshops
- Film screenings
- Performances & Special events

These events seek to engage new, 'non-core' audiences through working with partners. Often these are part of 'late event' programmes which occur on the second Friday of each month. These events are very social and offer opportunities to work with the museum space in different ways.

- Formal adult learning courses (series of sessions)

E.g. working with the Open University (OU) to create courses at the British Museum for the OU syllabus.

- Recently introduced projects include: *Myths retold* (monthly storytelling performances for adults) and *Sounds of...* (monthly world music performances in relevant galleries).



**Are adult audiences important to your institution? What do you do to engage this audience with you temporary exhibitions and permanent displays? What are they interested in: factual lectures or story-telling and performances? Would gallery talks encourage visitors from neighbouring businesses? Would hosting a special event, giving people plenty of notice, encourage people who have to travel to get to your institution? Would your colleagues be willing to present talks, lectures, study sessions and to facilitate discussions? Could you work with a local university to host a guest speaker?**

**Think about:** Visitor insights

**Handy hints and tips:** qualitative research methods

**Context:** Understanding your visitor is important for many reasons, from finding out why visitors come in order to find new audiences and raise awareness within those groups to making the visitor experience better, thus increasing word of mouth recommendations and positive online reviews. There are many ways of evaluating visitor experience. Qualitative methods in particular are useful because you can measure visitor satisfaction and experience and produce working outcomes.

Intercept interviews

Conducting surveys on site with visitors while they are interacting with your institution

Focus groups

Interviews in which a group of people are asked for their perceptions, opinions and attitudes about the subject of the focus group e.g. experience of audio guides in the museum

Surveys, gathering information through a series of questions online, on paper or in person

Observation & Follow-alongs

Watching the behavior of visitors in your institution e.g. tracking one person throughout a museum or monitoring how long visitors spend looking at each display case in a gallery

*Think about! Use volunteers and/or students to conduct the observation and collate and report on their findings.*

**Getting started**

**1. Frame your question**

**Think about what you are really trying to figure out and distill it into 1-3 key questions**

*Think about! Make sure your questions are not leading.*

**2. Create a test plan**

**Think about what kind of information you need to collect to answer your question and what the best way to collect it would be**

*Think about! Surveys (cheap and easy online & in person) and interviews (intercept visitors at the museum in queues for example or use any existing online forums)*



**Have you evaluated your institution and surveyed visitor experience before? How could investigating visitor experience improve your institution? What would be the most productive way of approaching your visitors?**