

South Asia Gallery

Criteria and Main Messages

This document looks at the themes spanning across Galleries and how that translates into the messages that visitors should take away with them after having experienced the Gallery. These have been developed out of conversations with the Collective at the large meetings and the Anthology Working Group sessions as well as with the Manchester Museum, the British Museum and the Design Team. They are shaped by the original brief in creating this Gallery and are very much still a draft that will continue to evolve as the project develops. The aim in creating these is to ensure that the stories and content curated within the Gallery are connected across Anthologies and give visitors clear messages about both local and global South Asian identity and culture.

Criteria across Anthologies and Stories

This criteria outlines the main themes spanning the contents in the Gallery. Each story within an Anthology should correspond to a few of the below criteria. The overall Gallery will therefore incorporate all of these themes to some degree across Anthologies in order for the visitor to learn about what it means to be South Asian, to be part of the South Asian diaspora, what we mean by South Asian culture as well as how this is connected to Manchester.

- **South Asian Diaspora in Manchester:** The unique perspective of the diaspora in Manchester is a lens to share their stories and explore what it means to be South Asian today
- **Manchester and South Asia:** Creativity and innovation have been strong bonds that link Manchester and South Asia together; for example, through the historical textile industry, as well as through the influence that innovative and creative practitioners of South Asian heritage working in and around Manchester have had on British design.
- **British South Asian identity:** There is no single, stable definition of what it means to be British Asian - its richness, complexity and diversity defies categorisation.
- **Connections:** As a modern region defined as eight countries today, South Asia has always had an influence over and has been influenced by both neighbouring and global nations. Through the movement of people, ideas and goods South Asia has been connected to the rest of the world since ancient times
- **South Asian creativity and innovation:** South Asians have played a significant role in the development of influential ancient and modern ideas, cultural and artistic practices as well as technical and scientific concepts. South Asians and South Asian culture are continuously evolving and informing the world, while also being changed by it
- **Disrupting Stereotypes:** Moving away from traditional narratives and unproductive representations and moving towards South Asian-led stories that focus on the multiplicity of this region and its global diaspora.
- **Protest and resistance:** There is a long history of tackling inequality and injustice amongst South Asian communities who fight for greater social justice, agency, equality and freedom.
- **Untold stories:** Showcasing powerful key figures, including influential women and LGBTQ+ individuals, as a way to reveal the meaningful and inspiring contribution of South Asians in the past and present that have too often been hidden from history.
- **Trauma and pain:** the lived experiences of people in South Asia and the global diaspora is often accompanied by experiences and memories of trauma, pain and prejudice. This has and continues to affect people's identities and sense of belonging.
- **Impact of Empire:** Colonialism, specifically the British Empire, continues to affect both global geopolitics as well as the lived experiences and personal histories of South Asian diaspora communities, including here in Manchester.

- **A Culture of Care:** how the tradition of care is a key part of South Asian society, from the safeguarding of traditions, to the strong sense of community, to the protection of the environment
- **Continuously Evolving:** South Asian culture is not static. From its ancient origins, it has dynamically shifted over time in response to the world around it. Many contemporary and future issues have their roots in the past, revealing important trajectories of ideas, people and concepts – both positive and negative – that are necessary to explore to better understand the complexity of South Asia.

Visitor outcomes [Main Messages]

These messages are what we would like visitors to take away from experiencing the Gallery and the stories contained within it.

- Visitors will recognise that South Asia cannot be summarised as a single place, people, faith, language, or culture. Its diversity and pluralism are its key attributes.
- Visitors will understand that the South Asia Gallery was co-curated with a Collective of local people of South-Asian heritage and that their personal stories, identities and experiences are woven through the histories and narratives on display
- Visitors will recognise the long-standing links between Manchester, South Asia and the South Asian diaspora.
- Visitors will consider how South Asia is, and always had been a dynamic place of creativity and invention - continuously evolving as the ideas, influences and people of the region move around the globe.
- Visitors will recognise that members of the South Asian diaspora have varied and changing personal and cultural identities
- Visitors will reflect on common misunderstandings of and/or lack of knowledge about South Asian and British Asian culture and history. Emotional and intellectual connections with the stories and objects on display will also help to dispel entrenched stereotypes and question established narratives.
- Visitors will reflect on their own experiences of migration and community in this space and find personal relevance and a sense of belonging in the stories told
- Visitors will feel as though they have visited a relevant exhibition that helps them better understand both Manchester and the wider world they live in today.