

South Asia Gallery EVALUATOR BRIEF

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1. TIMELINE & FEE

Brief issued on: 7th August 2023

Responses by: 4th September 2023

Shortlisted candidate meetings: w/c 11th September 2023

Appointed by: 2nd October 2023

Fee: £11,500 1. South Asia Gallery Evaluation

£10,000 2. South Asia Gallery Visitor Evaluation

Available as a package (1+2 total fee 21.5k) or as individual lots

The Fee available is inclusive of VAT, expenses and compensation for participants

2. INTRODUCTION

The University of Manchester's Manchester Museum is seeking to engage with an independent evaluation specialist to evaluate the South Asia Gallery (SAG).

Manchester Museum, part of The University of Manchester, first opened in 1890 and it is the largest university museum in the UK. The beautiful Grade II listed building, designed by renowned architect Alfred Waterhouse, is home to around 4.5 million objects.

February 2023 marked a huge moment in Manchester Museum's rich history as we reopened our doors following a once-in-a-generation, £15 million transformation. Much more than extending our buildings footprint, we are committed to building better understanding, compassion and empathy, and foregrounding inclusive narratives and new perspectives. We showcase from across our historic and diverse collections, as well as addressing the urgencies of the present day.

The South Asia Gallery, a partnership project with the British Museum, is an exceptional new space creating the first permanent gallery in the country dedicated to exploring the stories, experiences, cultures and contributions of South Asian diaspora communities in the UK.

Designed and built with a spirit of collaboration and co-production, with a unique Collective of educators, community leaders, artists, historians, journalists, scientists, musicians, students and others from the South Asian diaspora, it will be a multilingual place for emotional connections, new perspectives where lived experiences and collections come together.

Through a process of facilitated research and development a Collective-led narrative and interpretation, (storytelling and story-making) approach The South Asia Collective (SAGC), museum workers and design team have worked together in partnership. Decision-making about what goes into the gallery and how

the stories are told, has been underpinned by a commitment to transparency and meets with the criteria outlined and supported by funders.

With a performance space at its centre, it is more than just a gallery of stories, objects and experiences – it will also generate new ideas, events, performances, learning and public programmes. Even after opening, the displays should not be static but open to change, reinterpretation and new forms of curation.

Co-curation on such an epic scale as this is very rarely if ever seen in museums. Manchester Museum believes the future is collaborative and is committed to opening up its processes and story-making.

For more details about the aims of the SAG and the principles of co-curation we are working with please see the accompanying documents:

- hello future Brochure
- SAG Stage 3 Co-curation - Principles of Involvement
- SAG Criteria and Main Messages

3. WAYS OF WORKING

Collaborative

In keeping with the co-curation approach to the development of this gallery, this evaluation brief has also been 'co-curated'. Working on this process are four members of the South Asia Gallery collective, three members of staff at Manchester Museum and one member of staff at the British Museum. Each stage of the evaluation process from recruitment (setting this brief, promoting the opportunity, shortlisting, interviewing and selection) is being delivered collectively. The appointed evaluator will take a highly collaborative approach to working with this collective of people, be able to account for this in their planning and engage enthusiastically with the process. Participants are motivated and highly engaged in reflective practice which has generated rich information for the evaluation to draw on e.g. blogs, film content from sessions.

Manchester

We are open to working with evaluator/evaluators based outside of Manchester, however, the successful candidate will need to know Manchester and its cultural sector well and be able to spend time, in person, in the gallery, at the museum, and with the South Asia Gallery Collective.

Qualitative

We anticipate that the evaluation will focus on qualitative methods and pay particular attention to process – an exploration of how and why certain things happened, the impacts that have been achieved (or not), the additions and unintended outcomes. Why was co-curation important? How has the process changed the impacts of the gallery?

Inclusive

The successful candidate will have an in-depth knowledge of equitable evaluation and should be knowledgeable about South Asian diaspora communities in Manchester. It is important that everyone who has been part of the South Asia Gallery exhibition development and project over the last two years has an opportunity to share their experience and perspectives through the evaluation – this includes people core to its delivery, those involved for shorter periods and those indirectly involved.

While experience working in a heritage setting is not essential, demonstrable experience working with community projects is.

Caring

Ethical research is a priority. The gallery themes can be challenging and personal. Through the development process consideration for potential trauma was an essential consideration and avoiding potentially retraumatizing through evaluation must be too. A knowledge of, or willingness to engage with, trauma informed evaluation and practice would be beneficial.

Appropriate financial compensation for some of the participant's time and contributions is expected as part of the stated fee e.g. vouchers for focus group participants.

Imaginative

The produced report will be an engaging and imaginative document, mindful of the diverse audiences it is for.

Sharing practice and learning

We feel that it is crucial that the co-production approach, as it is being used to develop the South Asia Gallery, is well understood so that this innovative practice can be studied, theorised and shared widely. The evaluation should be useful for the 'next' project, documenting learning for the future. If we were doing it again, we would... Sharing our learning is a crucial part of the process.

4. EVALUATION AIMS, FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES – 1. SAG EVALUTAION

Main evaluation aims:

- A. Has the SAG endeavour delivered on Manchester Museum's core values of care, inclusion and imagination? What did this look like in terms of the:
- **Process** of co-curating the SAG Gallery
 - **Experience** of creating and delivering the project and gallery
 - The **levels of equity, involvement, agency and ownership** experienced and felt by the SAGC
 - The delivery of the project's main objectives?
- B. What has been the **impact and legacy** of the SAG co-curation endeavour (to date)?

Evaluation focus:

This evaluation will focus on the process and experience of co-curating the SAG gallery. It seeks to explore the journeys, participation and impact of being involved in the collaborative creation of SAG by key stakeholders. These include: the SAGC (past and present members, roughly 40 people), Manchester Museum staff (directly and indirectly involved) and The British staff, contractors and consultants.

A full list of potential evaluation participants will be supplied.

We understand the need for and are planning evaluation of the wider visitor experience of the gallery.

Evaluation objectives

To explore the main evaluation aims we are interested in:

- 1. How the SAG endeavour has delivered on its ambitions:**
 - Explore key achievements, successes, outcomes and outputs of the project?
 - For whom
 - How were these achieved (rationale)
 - Implications

- Any unintended outcomes, additions, extras
- For the SAGC members, have their ambitions been realized and how?
 - What, if anything, has not been achieved and why?
- For the Museum, what was it about the co-curation process that impacted these achievements, outcomes and outputs?
- Explore disappointments – things that didn't work out as planned or unable to achieve?
 - What could have been done better – what, where and how?

2. What was the process of co-curating the SAG? How were the values of care, inclusion and imagination actioned?

- What was felt about the way the project was recruited and communicated?
 - What were experiences of expectation management?
- What role did the co-curators play in the development?
 - How inclusive was the process?
 - What sense of equity or power sharing was felt by or experienced by the SAG?
 - Where did this feel strongest, where did it feel weakest and why?
 - Could people get involved as much as they wanted? Who felt included and not – when or why?
- How did people feel about the ways of working in SAG? (e.g. the groups formed, partnership co-curation ethos and approach, working online etc.)
- Effects of Covid on the process of working on SAG?
- Does the way in which this gallery was developed feel different, innovative – in what ways and in what places? Where might it not be?
- How has museum practice changed or been adapted by this co-curating experience?
 - What does this change look like?

3. What was the experience of working on SAG for the SAGC?

- How were the collective cared for during the process? What was the experience of care (mentally, emotionally, personally) and any challenges?
- What levels of trust and respect were formed?
- Was the resource/financial consideration appropriate? Was it fair? Were there gaps?
- What burden of responsibility was felt?
- What, if any, skills were developed during the process?
- Levels of ownership, pride and investment (emotional as well as time and resource) in SAG?

4. What has the impact of the co-curation of SAG?

- Was a diversity of representation, voice and perspective realized in SAG?
 - Where and how was this done well, where was this more limited and why?
- What, if any, personal or professional links, connections and networks formed?
- What has the impact of SAG/SAGC been on people outside the project?
- Impressions of the final gallery output and future programmes.
- Appetite for more collaboration?
- Where is there still learning about co-curation to be done? Where are the gaps in knowledge?

5. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The appointed SAG Evaluator will work with the 'client' (in this case it will be a steering group of SAG collective members (4) and MM and BM staff working on the evaluation).

The participants in the research will be all stakeholder groups. We would expect the following people to be included in your research:

1. The South Asia Gallery Collective (past and present)
2. Manchester Museum staff
3. British Museum staff
4. South Asia Gallery consultants, freelance staff and contractors (designers, artists, interpretation)

The appointed SAG Visitor Evaluator will

You will plan and coordinate all aspects of the evaluation delivery within the allotted fee, managing and distributing the budget appropriate, including appropriate compensation for contributors e.g., vouchers for focus group members.

Reporting will be to:

- Manchester Museum (the client)
- Members of the South Asia Gallery Collective evaluation steering group

Outputs:

1. Final evaluation documents/report
2. Raw data collected throughout evaluation process
3. Reflection/Feedback session with key stakeholders

5. EVALUATION AIMS, FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES – 2. VISITOR EVALUATION

Main evaluation aims:

A qualitative exploration of visitor's response to, understanding of, feelings about and engagement with the SAG Gallery

Methodological suggestions:

- Focus groups (qualitative)
- Intercept interviews in the gallery
- Accompanied visits/in-depth interviews

Audience focus:

- People of South Asian heritage
- Target audiences of SAG / MM – will need to define this more

Objectives

- What motivated people to visit/revisit if been before?
- Gauge visitor response to the gallery
- does it feel warm and welcoming, how?
- What do they think the gallery is all about?
- Do visitors think the exhibition was suitable for them/their group?
- Did they feel it was 'for them'? Why/why not?
- How does the gallery work as a sequence of experiences - the objects, stories, films,

performance space, design etc.

- Points of relevance and resonance – what/rationale for this/with whom?
- Engagement with the objects on display?
- What do visitors think of the anthology/thematic approach – feel satisfied content/focus/insight wise with this approach?
- How do ppl respond the interpretive approach – what works/doesn't work for them? Preferences? Things to standout/get ignored/cause challenges?
- How present are the collective in the space? Is their role clear? Where does this come across? How do people respond to this co-curated way of creating the gallery?
- What do visitors take away from the exhibition?
- What do visitors think the exhibition is about? To what extent can they identify the key messages?
- To what extent were the visitor outcomes met?
- Is the partnership with the BM picked up?

6. TIMETABLE

Suggested/expected timetable which we would expect to be responded to in responses to this brief.

- October 2023 - Project planning and set up, including design of primary research
- October 2023 – April 2024 - Delivery phase / data collection/reporting including public facing/creative/ dissemination
- Final report due to Client - May 2024

7. WHO WE WANT TO WORK WITH

- You are an experienced project evaluator with an in-depth knowledge of equitable evaluations
- You have experience working within the cultural sector
- You are ready to enthusiastically engage with the co-curational approach of the South Asia Gallery
- You are familiar with Manchester and able to regularly meet with South Asia Gallery collective members and project supporters in person.
- You are knowledgeable about South Asian diaspora communities in Manchester

8. ACTIONS & NEXT STEPS

To respond to this brief, individuals and agencies are required to submit the following by e-mail to nusrat.ahmed@manchester.ac.uk:

- Costed project proposal including detailed timeline from engagement to delivery of the outputs (we would expect this to complete April 2024)
- Portfolio that includes relevant examples of evaluations delivered by the applicant

Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to further discuss their proposals with a small team from the South Asia Gallery project.