

Archive Assistant - Kick Start Scheme

Background

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Frida Kahlo to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Mark Wallinger.

With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see.

The Gallery is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

Overview

This position available through the Kick Start Scheme at the Whitechapel Gallery is an opportunity for candidates to gain training, skills and experience in a specific aspect of the workings of a public gallery. Participants gain an insight into the different career paths available in the arts sector, specifically in archives and records management, and have the opportunity to be mentored by experienced professionals.

The Archive Assistant will gain practical work experience within the Whitechapel Gallery's Archive, learning how the collections are managed, stored and cared for. They will gain a broad appreciation of the skills required in the archive sector and how the archive service fulfils its mission on a daily basis.

To carry out a work programme of arrangement, description, preservation and digitisation tasks to required sector standards.

Role

The primary aspects of the role will include:

- Engagement with the archive collection through researching and responding to public enquiries
- Working alongside the archivist to ensure collection management, catalogue

Kick Start Scheme
Archive Assistant role
description

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development and digitization services continue to develop

- Digital record-keeping
- Supporting the day to day administrative management of the archive, to enable the efficient running of the team
- Carrying out a work programme of records' arrangement, description and preservation to required sector standards

The Archive Assistant through the Kick Start Scheme can expect to receive work-based training and supervision to develop competency in the following:

External communications

- Responding to Archive enquiries by email, phone, and in person;
- Coordinating researcher visits to the Archive;
- Supervising researchers;
- Invigilation, including providing information and assistance to gallery visitors.

Historic and cultural collection management

- Creating original catalogue records of the Gallery's unique archive collection, consisting of documents and pictures spanning 120 years
- Sifting and packaging original documents in accordance with relevant sector standards
- Tracking and keeping records of researcher visits and enquiries
- Assisting in the ongoing cataloguing of the Gallery's extensive library of art books.

Main Responsibilities

1. Welcoming and supporting the public in their use of the Foyle Reading Room (FRR) and its facilities, including online resources, book and archive collections.
2. Working with the archive team to operate and support the relevant activity at the FRR and maintain the public opening hours.
3. Supervising publicly-accessible spaces (the FRR and the Archive Gallery), to maintain safety and security, collections care and appropriate public access to the exhibitions.
4. Supporting the Archivist and taking part in the research and enquiry service by dealing with enquiries, responding via email, telephone or in person and helping users with their queries and research, supporting them throughout.
5. Ensuring the maintenance, safety and security of the premises, equipment, visitors, and collections by adhering to the agreed policies, procedures and standards required by the Whitechapel Gallery.
6. Assisting the Archivist with the outstanding ongoing cataloguing of archive material with the use of Modes software and preparing files for cataloguing as requested.

7. Assisting the Archivist with the collection and evaluation of key data including visitor numbers, volume of enquiries, complaints and requests for service.
8. Assisting staff from other departments and explaining the process required to deposit working files to the archive as and when needed.
9. Working with the Archivist as requested to deliver a range of formal and informal learning opportunities and events to increase the public's awareness and interest in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive including visits by schools, higher education students, community groups and other organisations.
10. Assisting with the care, conservation, digitisation and documentation of the archive collections in accordance with national accredited standards and the operational policies and procedures required by the Whitechapel Gallery.
11. Supporting interns, apprentices, volunteers as required.
12. Ensuring that the required health and safety standards and procedures are maintained for visitors and that any facilities management issues are reported to the Archivist or directly to the Operations team and resolved following procedures.
13. Attending meetings, working groups and training as required.
14. Undertaking other duties, commensurate with the level of the post as may be specified from time to time.

Person Specification:

- This role suits a candidate with a passion for contemporary **art, culture and primary research sources**, an eye for detail and an interest in the potential of an Archive.
- You do not need to be an expert in contemporary art, nor have knowledge of archiving, but a desire to learn alongside professionals. Excellent people skills are a must. The Line Manager for this role is the Archivist.
- Due to the nature of the role, willingness to fetch and carry boxes, heavy files and other material with the appropriate training and equipment is desirable.

Conditions of Work

- Placement: 6 Months
- Working Pattern: 25 hours per week, Tuesday to Friday
- Wages: £8.91 per hour, national minimum wage
- Hours of work: Between 9.30am – 5.45pm, one hour lunch break.