

Emotions and Curatorial Practice

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LECTURE SERIES

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12:15 - 13:15

Museums are sites of emotional engagement: what is represented in an exhibition (and how) may influence what visitors will know, think, remember and do – as a consequence of what they felt. This is particularly evident in the current context of global crises, which have brought museums to deal to an unprecedented extent with situations and topics that engender a range of emotional responses, from anxiety to fear, despair, nostalgia, empathy and hope. As new responsibilities and expectations are now placed on museums, curatorial teams are rapidly adapting the content and form of exhibitions: exhibition narratives explicitly invoke vulnerability, resilience and empathy, and offer to help us navigate through the emotional volatility and uncertainty of our times. Yet, whilst we know that exhibitions affect us, virtually no scholarly attention has been paid to emotions in curatorial work. What is the place and role of emotions in curatorial work? How is engagement with emotions impacting on curatorial work and related skills and knowledge? In this talk, I will draw on theories on emotions in the museum studies and cultural heritage studies to begin to answer these questions.

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