



Sound Museums: Designing for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Community

Half-day event hosted by the Department of Performing Arts, City, University of London

In partnership with Charcoalblue, Apex Acoustics, the Institute of Acoustics and SPARC (Sound, Practice & Research at City)

Friday, 28th June 2024, 13:00 – 18:00, Rooms AG08, AG22 and AG09, College Building, St John Street, London EC1V 4PB

Sign up: <https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/2024/june/sound-museums-designing-for-inclusion-wellbeing-and-community>

SCHEDULE

12noon onwards, registration, lunch and networking in room AG08, College Building

Panel sessions will be in room AG09 or AG22 depending on numbers. All rooms are on the ground floor of the College Building and close to each other

Session 1

12.45pm Welcome from Laudan Nooshin and housekeeping

1pm - 2.30pm

Chair: Richard Williams (SOAS)

Emily Bradfield (Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge)

‘Take a Walk in My Shoes. Exploring Multisensory Experiences of Being ‘In’ the Museum, Working with Adults with Non-Visible Disabilities’

Aimee Fletcher (University of Glasgow)

‘Creating Accessible Museums for Neurodivergent Audiences’

Shane Cryer (Ecophon) and Peter Rogers (Sustainable Acoustics)

‘Recombobulating and optimal acoustics at the Winchester Science Centre’

Angus Deuchars (ARUP)

‘Adding Context to User Experience with Sound. A Case Study on Deepening Visitor Engagement in Museum Threshold Spaces’

Session 2: 2.35pm - 3.45pm

Chair: Maria Mendonça (Kenyon College/City)

Fiona Slater (Science Museum)

‘Open for All – Strategy Into Practice’

Charlotte Slark and Alison Eardley (The Sensational Museum)

‘Sound in the Sensational Museum’

Milo Fox (Charcoalblue)

‘Acoustics of the Grandiose: Accessible Design in Historic Museums’

Olivia Hewkin (VocalEyes)

‘Innovating Audio Description for Museums’

Esther Fox (Accentuate/Screen South) and Ruth Garde (Curating Visibility)

‘Possibilities for Immersive Sound as Interpretation Tool in Museums’

3.45 to 4.15pm Tea/coffee in AG09

Session 3: 4.15pm - 5.45pm

Chair: Amanda Brecknell (Architect, Charcoalblue)

James Wilkie

‘Seeing things for what they are, listening out for what things could be: Using sound art to speculate on belonging, wellbeing, and access through the white cube’

Rebecca Romeo Pitone (Apex Acoustics)

‘Decolonising Museum Soundscapes: A Practice-Based Enquiry’

Jean Hewitt, Madeleine Granland and Rebecca Adda (Buro Happold).

‘Sensory Friendly Museums’

5.45pm Final comments and wrap up

6pm, pub and networking @ the Dame Alice Owen, 3 min walk from College Building
292 St John St, London EC1V 4PA.

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

1. Emily Bradfield (Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge)

‘Take a Walk in My Shoes. Exploring Multisensory Experiences of Being ‘In’ the Museum, Working with Adults with Non-Visible Disabilities’

This presentation reports on a research project involving sensory ethnography observations and walking interviews with adults with non-visible disabilities. The presentation will share initial reflections.

Emily Bradfield is a Practitioner Research Associate: Collections & Wellbeing at The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. She is interested in using creative research methods to explore participatory arts engagement which supports positive wellbeing. Emily's research focus is on how it feels to be 'in' the museum, from a multisensory perspective and working with people affected by non-visible disabilities and energy-limiting conditions. Emily also works as an Independent Consultant. Emily holds a PhD in Creative Ageing (University of Derby) and an MSc in Cultural Events Management (De Montfort University).

2. Aimee Fletcher (University of Glasgow)

'Creating Accessible Museums for Neurodivergent Audiences'

Using the findings from her PhD research into the barriers to and motivations for visiting museums for neurodivergent adults, Aimee Fletcher will discuss the role that the sensory environment can have on the visitor experience. Aimee will discuss the findings, what they mean for the sector and the impact that an accessible museum can have on neurodivergent visitors and workers.

Aimee Fletcher is an autistic PhD researcher based at the University of Glasgow. Her research, funded by the Lord Kelvin and Adam Smith scholarship, is an interdisciplinary and participatory project focused on improving the experiences of neurodivergent people in cultural heritage settings. Alongside her studies, Aimee has worked in support services with neurodivergent young people for six years and most recently has been working for the National Autistic Society as their Evidence and Research Coordinator. Aimee has provided accessibility consultancy and developed resources for organisations including The Hunterian (Glasgow), the National Library of Scotland, the University of Edinburgh and the Museums Association.

3. Shane Cryer (Ecophon) and Peter Rogers (Sustainable Acoustics)

'Recombobulating and optimal acoustics at the Winchester Science Centre'

The huge volume and pyramid design of the Winchester Science Centre created a noisy and challenging environment for neurodivergent visitors. This presentation addresses the do's and don'ts of museum acoustic design and how to retrospectively create a welcoming, inclusive environment.

Shane Cryer manages the education sector in the UK and Ireland for Swedish acoustic experts, Ecophon. After a career in the construction industry, having studied building and property surveying, he now concentrates on building acoustics. Working closely with organisations such as The Institute of Acoustics (IOA) and the RIBA, Shane has been promoting 'BB93: Acoustic Design of Schools' standard via CPD seminars, conferences and articles in the trade press. Shane also manages several acoustic research projects around the UK.

Peter Rogers (BSc(Hons) MSc CEng FIOA FRSA MIOL) is Managing Director of Sustainable Acoustics and has over 30 years experience on a wide range of building acoustics and environmental projects. His last ten years have been spent building and running his own Company, which is now carbon neutral and applies acoustics cognisant of a drive to achieve sustainable outcomes. Education has been a passion of Peter's and communicating complex ideas in an understandable and creative way is talent he has developed. This comes in useful when designing for all. The Company's vision is Acoustics for Life, so inclusion and wellbeing are central to this. In what little spare time he has he is also a beekeeper.

4. Angus Deuchars (ARUP)

‘Adding Context to User Experience with Sound. A Case Study on Deepening Visitor Engagement in Museum Threshold Spaces’

This presentation discusses a case study project on the role that sound can play in museum thresholds to prepare and orientate visitors. The case study is taken from an AHRC funded research project Arup undertook with the University of Leicester that studied how museums could develop visitor engagement in their threshold spaces. The research indicates that through careful and considerate selection of sound, engagement through the aural sense is achieved, which adds further perceptual dimensions to visitor experience.

Angus Deuchars is a venue designer working in the arts, culture, and entertainment sector with a background in acoustic design. His project work extends from strategic planning and design through to post occupancy advice. In his work, Angus aims to design to positively support users in their experience of sound to create more inclusive environments, deepen storytelling and to foster a sense of identity and place for the communities they serve.

5. Fiona Slater (Head of Access and Equity, Science Museum Group)

‘Open for All – Strategy Into Practice’

How does the Science Museum Group’s value and commitment to be ‘Open for All’ translate into the design and sensory accessibility across 6 Museum sites.

Fiona Slater joined the Science Museum Group in April 2021, in the newly developed role of Head of Access and Equity, to oversee the Group’s public commitment and core value of being ‘Open for All’. For over 15 years Fiona has worked within Museum and third sector organisations to champion inclusive and accessible practice and is passionate about the creative potential of a more diverse cultural sector. Between 2011 and 2018 she played a central role in the development of ‘Unlimited’, a ground-breaking commissioning programme for disabled artists, working in partnership with cultural venues across the UK and internationally.

6. Charlotte Slark and Alison Eardley (The Sensational Museum)

Sound in the sensational museum

Multisensory interpretation plays an ever-increasing role in museum practice. Whether in temporary or permanent exhibitions, many museums and museum designers are looking to enrich engagement with touch or sound, and in some instances, with smell and taste. Nevertheless, there is a core implicit assumption that multisensory elements are working to support a core visual experience.

Underpinned by research from psychology and cognitive neuroscience, which challenge the assumptions that privilege sight, the Sensational Museum project is aiming to re-think the role of the senses in the museum. Drawing on what we know about disability, the project is re-imagining interpretation and design practices, such that no one sense is necessary or sufficient to experience a museum or gallery.

This presentation will discuss the role of sound in the sensational museum and how it can be utilised to create a multisensory museum experience.

Alison Eardley is a Reader (Associate Professor) in Psychology, Cultural Heritage and Inclusion at the University of Westminster. With a background in researching imagery, imagination and spatial representation in people who are blind and sighted, she has spent the last 10 years working with the museum sector to examine the ways in which understanding and research methods from psychology can be used to re-imagine museum interpretation, enhancing accessibility and broaden participation for all audiences.

Charlotte Slark is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Psychology at the University at Westminster. She is an interdisciplinary scholar who uses both social science and humanities methodologies to examine museums as institutions, with a particular focus on access and inclusion. She came to academia from the museum sector and has experience working both back and front of house at different museums in England.

7. Milo Fox (Charcoalblue)

Acoustics of the Grandiose: Accessible Design in Historic Museums

The role of sound and the acoustics that affect how those sounds are perceived are becoming ever more key to the design of new museum and gallery exhibits. Where acoustic metrics exist that are regularly being refined for the design of accessible new build spaces, how do we apply these metrics to the vast, marble and stone institutions that make up such a large proportion of public museum and gallery spaces across the UK? How can we achieve equitable spaces with limited opportunities to interact with the existing fabric of historic buildings, all whilst minimising monetary cost and environmental impact?

A discussion of the suitability of acoustic metrics and design approaches shall be put forward, with focus on a case study - Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery, at the Science Museum, London.

Milo Fox is an acoustician working at theatre, acoustic and experience consultancy Charcoalblue. Following his Masters in Physics at Queen Mary, University London and training and work as a saxophonist and music teacher, Milo has worked as a consultant for spaces in the UK and across the globe. His work has included design of room acoustics, sound and vibration separation, and environmental noise impact for a variety of new build and refurbishment projects, including theatres, music venues, performing arts schools, and public exhibition spaces. He has worked on a number of educational buildings including ArtsEd in Chiswick and ongoing works at London College of Communication, alongside public spaces/exhibitions including the Technicians Gallery at London's Science Museum, Sidcup Storyteller, and the Isle of Man Nautical Museum.

8. Olivia Hewkin (VocalEyes)

Innovating Audio Description for Museums

VocalEyes' mission is to bring 'art and culture to life for blind and visually impaired people at theatres, museums, galleries, heritage sites and online'. But how do we continue to do this in a way that embraces new practices and approaches to exhibition design, co-curation, and in the spirit of being a disability-led organisation? This presentation will discuss the challenges and opportunities of designing with both creativity and access in mind.

Olivia Hewkin is the Museums, Galleries and Heritage Programme Manager at VocalEyes, an Arts Council England sector support organisation which focuses on increasing opportunities in the arts for Blind and Visually Impaired people. Olivia has worked across the museums sector

for nearly 15 years, in both project funding and project delivery roles. She has an MA in Cultural Heritage Management and is particularly passionate about increasing access and representation in the arts.

9. Esther Fox (Accentuate/Screen South) and Ruth Garde (Curating Visibility)

Possibilities for Immersive Sound as Interpretation Tool in Museums

Screen South via its Accentuate, Curating for Change and Curating Visibility schemes, are keen to explore possibilities for 3-Dimensional Immersive Sound environments in museum settings. During this discussion they will explore why its important to be thinking more creatively in terms of the possibilities of 3-Dimensional soundscapes to enable visually impaired museum visitors to have more meaningful and engaging experiences.

Esther Fox is the Head of the Accentuate Programme, one of Screen South's portfolio of projects. She has been leading initiatives for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people to drive change in the cultural sector for over 15 years, most recently devising and delivering the landmark projects Curating for Change and Curating Visibility, working with over 20 Museums across England. She has an interest in how creative digital technologies can create more accessible experiences for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent visitors.

Ruth Garde is co-project manager of Curating for Change, a scheme run by Screen South through its Accentuate programme. The scheme exists to create strong career pathways for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent curators. Alongside this role, she is an independent access-first arts producer and curator. Since 2003 she has produced and delivered interdisciplinary exhibitions and public engagement projects bringing together art, the humanities and science to explore what it means to be human. Ruth brings an anti-racist and anti-ableist lens to her practice, and continuously hold herself accountable for these approaches. She is committed to an access-first approach, which means embedding access and inclusive practice from the outset of projects, rather than as an 'add-on' later in the process.

10. James Wilkie

Seeing things for what they are, listening out for what things could be: Using sound art to speculate on belonging, wellbeing, and access through the white cube.

The "leaking" and pervasive nature of sound are explored as an interface to subvert the museum/project space as a hallowed container of rare objects and into a resonant membrane where divergent imaginations and experiences may converge in and around it to form progressive thoughts on belonging.

Using this theme, James will navigate his experiences in creating and presenting works at the intersection of sound and belonging - virtually (aoraspace.com), the community of the Chattri Memorial for the Brighton Festival, and his latest project, Sono-Electro 2024 a "festival dedicated to sound art taking place in West St Leonards, inviting artists and audiences alike to examine their relationship with place through hyper-local interventions that touch on broader global environmental narratives."

James Wilkie (b.1984) is a sound artist and composer who explores the connections between persons, spaces, and the imagination using sound and creative technology resulting in immersive A/V installation work, soundscapes, text, and live performances. James currently

works with Sensory Experiences as Audio Lead and Creative, consulting with brands such as Bentley Motors, John Lewis, and Lipton Ice Tea. He lectures at UCL Bartlett Designing for Performance and Interaction MArch as he continues to work on his own music and research.

James holds a BMus in Film Scoring at Berklee College of Music and an MMus in Sonic Arts from Goldsmiths. This hybrid skill set has offered James an exciting range of collaborations including composing ambient music design for film composers Hans Zimmer and Geoff Zanelli at Remote Control Productions to immersive installations for OPPO phones.

Selected Works - For a complete selection of works, please visit <https://jameswilkie.xyz/>

11. Rebecca Romeo Pitone (Apex Acoustics)

‘Decolonising Museum Soundscapes: A Practice-Based Enquiry’

This talk explores the colonial origins of museums, and how they have influenced the development of museum soundscapes. Many early museums were designed in the Greek revival style; with its expressive volumes and hard-reflecting surfaces, this style has led to overwhelming ‘cavernous’ interiors. Since their inception, museums have evolved from being huge containers of artefacts - an enlarged Wunderkammer - to being a public, inclusive (at least in its aims) place for learning and self-development, where the emphasis is on the visitor experience. Drawing from a recent consultation Apex Acoustics carried out for the renovation of the Durham Light Infantry Museum, this talk discusses how acoustic design could reinforce this important shift.

Rebecca Romeo Pitone has a background in sound, film music and Cultural Studies. After joining Apex Acoustics in 2019, she developed an interest in the construction of meaning within indoor soundscapes. Her approach to Soundscape is non-technical and considers the cultural aspects of how sounds are produced and interpreted within multimedia contexts.

12. Jean Hewitt, Madeleine Granland and Rebecca Adda (Buro Happold)

‘Sensory Friendly Museums’ (panel)

Jean Hewitt

In 2022, The British Standards Institute published PAS 6463 *Design for the Mind – Neurodiversity and the Built Environment*. This pre-statement will highlight key strands of the guidance applicable to both design and management of sensory inclusive museum environments and exhibition spaces.

Jean Hewitt is a senior member of the inclusive environments team at Buro Happold, an Honorary Associate Professor at UCL The Bartlett, and the UK ‘s Disability Access Ambassador for the Built Environment. Jean was technical author of PAS6463, working with a steering group of experts with lived and professional experience of neurodiversity.

Madeleine Granland

Research indicates that almost half of neurodivergent people are avoiding museums and galleries due to sensory overload and underload. Building on this research, Madeleine will use a case study to demonstrate how museums can be designed to provide more enjoyable experiences for neurodivergent visitors.

Madeleine Granland is a consultant at Buro Happold inclusive environments who has completed research focused on going beyond the minimum when designing for neurodiversity

in museums and galleries. Madeleine brings global perspectives from work in Australia, Europe, USA and the Middle East. Her approach is founded on co-design and enabling play and emotive experiences within architecture.

Rebecca Adda

Currently, museums mainly accommodate blind and low-vision visitors by translating art and objects into tactile and audible experiences. Using the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a case study, Rebecca will discuss the interplay between tactile and audible experiences across museum architecture, and how multisensory wayfinding can create more meaningful experiences.

Rebecca Adda works in the inclusive environments team at Buro Happold and has experience on projects across the USA, UK and the Middle East. Her previous research at the Metropolitan Museum of Art focused on multisensory wayfinding and art interpretation for blind and low-vision visitors. Rebecca's approach focuses on both sensory-specific and sensory-friendly approaches, for equitable access in museum spaces and beyond.

Chair Biographies

Amanda Brecknell is an architect and specialist designer for arts and experiential spaces with Charcoalblue. With a rich background in ideating and coordinating performance-related construction projects, Amanda is uniquely positioned to blend extensive technical requirements into pragmatic, yet creative places for gathering. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Amanda is a passionate advocate and volunteer for the arts, a commitment that continually shapes her approach to the intersection of space, culture, design and community.

Maria Mendonça is Professor at Kenyon College, where she teaches in the Anthropology and Music Departments. Her research interests include sound in heritage and museum spaces, Indonesian music (particularly the gamelan traditions of Java, Bali and Sunda, and their development outside Indonesia), ethnographic film, and the intersections of sound and infrastructure. Her publications include articles in *Ethnomusicology* and *Asian Music*, and chapters in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Local Musicking* (2018) and *The Routledge Companion to Music and Human Rights* (2022). She recently completed a film on gong making in Central Java (*Goong: Sound Through Fire*, 2023) and is working on a manuscript on Archer Street W1, London's "musicians' street" from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Richard Williams is a Senior Lecturer in Music and South Asian Studies in the Music Department at SOAS, University of London. He is a cultural historian of music in South Asia and is particularly interested in understanding how music and sound are explored in literature, and how colonialism reoriented early modern musical ideas and practices. His first book, 'The Scattered Court: Hindustani Music in Colonial Bengal', was published in 2023 and explores the circulation of musicians, genres, and musicologists between north India and Bengal between c.1750–1900, and examines how musical societies negotiated the changing politics of a colonial landscape. Richard's wider work has explored musical culture in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century South Asia; the history of emotions; music in Hindu theology and ritual; and Pakistani digital media and literature.