

## Part 1 : Project Proposal Application

To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor(s) and non-HE partner organisation.



Arts & Humanities  
 Research Council

**Before completing each section, please consult the Guidance Notes.  
 Failure to provide the required information may result in disqualification.**

SECTION 1: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT			
Proposed Project Title:	Histories, Collections and Practice: Gender and the Regional Art Gallery		
Project Summary: <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	This topical project explores gender representation in the collecting, curatorial and educational practices of UK art galleries from the early twentieth century to today. Using Newcastle's Laing Art Gallery (founded 1906) as a central case study, it adopts a new-museological approach to uncover the gendered power relations inscribed in the gallery's archive, which continue to influence practice today. The project will propose new impactful models for the museum sector, and nuance our understanding of the role of regional galleries in promoting public knowledge of the relationship between art and gender.		
Name of non-HE Partner Organisation:	Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne		
Name of Contact at non-HE Partner Organisation:	Julie Milne, Chief Curator	Email Address:	julie.milne@twmuseums.org.uk
	Anne Fountain, Lead Learning Team		anne.fountain@twmuseums.org.uk
Primary AHRC Subject Area:	Cultural and Museum Studies		
Secondary AHRC Subject Area (if <b>Interdisciplinary</b> ):	Visual Arts: Art History		
Does the project Include a creative practice component?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
If you have listed two subject areas above, do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>If Yes, please briefly state why:</b> <i>(Maximum 100 words):</i>	The project is situated at the nexus of Cultural and Museum Studies and Art History. The project's primary purpose is to inform the field of Cultural and Museum Studies, providing a new understanding of gender representation in the UK art gallery to thereby influence future practice, especially in the fields of education, exhibition making, interpretation and acquisitions. However, through its focus on galleries as public gatekeepers to the visual arts, the project will engage heavily with Art History's comparatively more developed fields of scholarship on gender and feminism.		
<b>Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:</b> <i>(Maximum 750 words)</i>			

Much of the attention currently given to the marginalised position of female artists in the British Art world tends to focus on individual creatives and their representation in national institutions. This project adopts a broader research remit by exploring wider gallery practices in relation to art and gender, doing so within the relatively-overlooked context of the regional gallery. The project uses the Laing Art Gallery (founded 1906) as a central case study, drawing on comparative research into other regional and national galleries.

The Laing offers a productive focus for exploring the project's key research questions. Approximately 5% of its permanent collection are works by female artists. This seemingly low figure is almost five-fold that of the National Gallery, where the figure is just 1% of the collection. How, then, can we better understand and conceptualise gender representation within the Laing's collection? In turn, what does this reveal about the history of regional galleries on this front – has it been more proactive than that of national institutions? As well as holding key works by artists including Laura Knight, Beryl Fowler and Ethel Walker, the Laing has a history of solo exhibitions of female artists yet to be researched. For example, in 1933 the Laing hosted one of Knight's earliest solo exhibitions, but we know little about the show's impact on the gallery's practice. Was it the success we might imagine and did it, perhaps, pave the way for future solo shows by female artists? This project will mine the archive to explore the extent to which the Laing, and comparative galleries, engaged with the politics of gender, especially during key movements such as suffrage and second-wave feminism. Recent exhibitions (*Exposed*, 2018; *Enchanted Interiors*, 2019) demonstrate the Laing's current investment on this front, but postgraduate research will help the Laing, and other galleries, to better understand their own past and build this awareness into ongoing policies around acquisitions, displays and learning.

On a broader front, the project's research will inform histories of gender representation in UK galleries by querying the dominant view that women have held little importance within histories of collecting and display. Furthermore, it will explore the relative independence of regional galleries in pursuing gendered agendas, challenging the conception that they are less innovative or progressive than national institutions. The student will undertake placements at a national gallery and two further regional galleries to better contextualise the findings of this study, which aims to provide a model for the ways in which galleries can engage with, and understand, the history and content of their collections to develop new narratives and initiatives relating to gender.

The project will be informed by archival and collections-based research as well as secondary scholarship on twentieth- and twenty-first century cultural histories of gender politics in Britain. The project's central methodology will be to build on the approach first advanced in *The New Museology* (Vergo, ed., 1989), placing the gallery itself under critical scrutiny to explore the wider social relations it embeds and enacts. This self-reflexive approach has chiefly been applied to History museums and US-based institutions (Kavanagh, ed., 1996) rather than art galleries or UK-based institutions, and has begun to be applied to gender only in the last decade (Levin, ed., 2010). Indeed, Ana Baeza's 2018 article argued that new directions in museum studies "must attend to the materiality of museum archives regarding their construction of gendered narratives." The PhD will combine this new museological approach with attention to the more developed field of gender studies and feminist theory in Art History, first given shape by Linda Nochlin's 1971 pioneering work, and more recently by Pollock (1999; 2007), Sjöholm Skrubbe (2016) and Reilly (2018).

#### Indicative thesis content:

#### **Introduction** (7,000 words)

#### **Section 1 (archive-based research): Gendering the Gallery** (30,000 words)

##### *Identifying relevant works, their acquisition and display*

Overview of work by female artists held both in the Laing's collections and comparative institutions; overview of works with key female subjects/themes

##### *Exploring past uses of these works and impact on gallery practice*

History of solo exhibitions of female artists; history of gender-themed exhibitions

#### **Section 2 (practice-based research): New Directions** (30,000 words)

##### *Proposing new methodologies*

Female artists in Britain today (new narratives and forms)

Curating Gender in 2020-24: state-of-the-field of UK exhibition-making and reflection on development of new Laing exhibition (c. 2023)

Learning Initiatives: empowering women and informing audiences through educational engagement

#### **Section 3: The Regional and the National** (10,000 words)

##### *Implications of comparative findings*

Situating the regional gallery in relation to national institutions

#### **Conclusion** (3,000 words)

**Please provide details of any resources and facilities, including details of any high cost equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that may be required to complete the project successfully, and where you will seek these resources (e.g. NBCDTP; partner resources; departmental/school funds). Please include estimated costs:**

*(Maximum 200 words)*

The student will receive training and mentorship in curatorial practice and gallery educational engagement work directly through the Laing, collaborating with staff and by undertaking central training courses offered through Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM), the major regional museum, art gallery and archives service to which the Laing belongs. The student will work closely with the Laing's curatorial and learning teams throughout their project and will be personally mentored by the Laing's Chief Curator, Julie Milne, and the Lead Learning Officer, Anne Fountain. The student will co-curate an exhibition for the Laing, working alongside an established curator and benefitting from further individual training in curatorial research and practice.

The student will participate in Northumbria's established PGR training programme, compulsory for all students.

A six-month placement working across a national gallery, as well as two regional galleries, will enable the student to develop their professional experience and undertake comparative research necessary to the PhD project. The placements will be brokered with the assistance of Julie Milne, but will require the NBCDTP's dedicated funds to support the student through this process (to include accommodation and travel costs for two months in London, and four months across two other UK cities).

**Please outline the arrangements for communication between the partner organisation and academic host organisation in regard of the project management and the monitoring of academic progress:**

*(Maximum 150 words)*

Deadlines for the student's progress, research and training will be agreed at the project's outset, and monitored through frequent full-team meetings every 2-3 months between the student, the supervisors and the external advisors. These meetings will take place on site at the Laing, a five-minute walk from Northumbria's city campus. The supervisory team will be responsible for monitoring the academic integrity of the study and ensuring it meets standard PhD milestones, whilst the Laing will ensure the student's access to the gallery materials, training and expertise required to complete their project and professional development.

The student will meet their lead supervisor monthly at Northumbria. They will have frequent (as required) access to mentoring by their external advisors by virtue of being based in the Laing's shared office space. On commencing their project, the student will undertake an induction at the Laing, in addition to standard induction activities at Northumbria University.

**What benefits will accrue to the student and the partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?**

*(Maximum 300 words)*

The project's collaboration with the Laing is crucial to the student's ability to complete their PhD research as it will facilitate access to the archival and research resources necessary for the project's core case study. Simultaneously, it will enable the student to gain a high level of professional experience. This will be equally beneficial either for a future career in the museum and heritage sector or for equipping the student with experience underpinning future impactful partnership work as an academic. The student will receive frequent access to the Laing's staff, enabling strong mentorship and specialist insights into the wider operations of a public art gallery. The student will receive the rare opportunity to co-curate an exhibition (c. 2023) at the gallery on a gender-related theme, working alongside an established curator. The Laing will also facilitate the student's placement at other art galleries.

The Laing welcomes this collaborative opportunity to further develop existing links between the gallery and Northumbria University. In recent years, the gallery has made a personal investment in exhibitions showcasing gender-related themes. The student's 2023 exhibition will be the third step in an ambitious portfolio of exhibitions (*Enchanted Interiors*, 2019; *Challenging Conventions*, 2021) focused on gender and hosted by the Laing, all so far supported through external funds and investment (Paul Mellon Foundation; pending Arts Council bid). Due to staffing constraints the Laing does not have the capacity to undertake sustained archival research into its archive, past practices and collections. The student will therefore enable the gallery to uncover new insights into their existing holdings as well as to identify strategic areas for new acquisitions. Such insights will be hugely valuable to the gallery, enabling them to perceive possibilities for future exhibition and display programming and in turn to inform the activities of the learning team.

**Please briefly state what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the partner will be making over the duration of the award:**

*(Maximum 100 words)*

The Laing will make an in-kind contribution of providing training and support to the student throughout the award. The student will be given a designated desk space in the curatorial offices and benefit from a close collaboration with curatorial and learning staff. The student will have access to TWAM's in-house training schemes. Julie Milne will draw on networks (especially the Tate-led national subject specialist network of British Art) to facilitate placements for the student at national and regional galleries, and the student will benefit from the opportunity to co-curate a Laing exhibition relating to their research.

**Please describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the student will be taking with the organisation:**  
(Maximum 300 words)

The student will be based chiefly at the Laing Art Gallery's curatorial offices and have full-time access to a designated desk. On site they will be supported by members of the wider curatorial team and managed by the gallery's Chief Curator, Julie Milne. The student will also have the support of Anne Fountain, the Lead for the Learning Team, who will provide insight into the ways in which the curatorial programme informs the gallery's wider educational programme. The Laing's curatorial offices hold an extensive Art History library and archival documentation relating to their collections which the student will draw on for their research. The student will also have access to the gallery's stores which are located on site.

The student's PhD research will itself be an activity undertaken in collaboration with the Laing, since it will necessitate access to the archives and collections held on site, and involve ongoing dialogue with staff members about their knowledge and expertise. A tangible output of this will be an exhibition on gender, co-curated by the student for delivery c. 2023. Additionally the student's research and accrued expertise will enable them to work with the curatorial and learning teams to inform gallery practice around display, programming, acquisitions and learning. This will enable the student to build a comprehensive portfolio of professional experience during their PhD studies.

The lead supervisor already works closely with the Laing in her role as PI on a collaborative AHRC Research Innovation Fund project ('Learning through the Art Gallery: Art, Literature and Disciplinarity', £191,207), which runs until June 2021 and underwrites a host of activities, including interdisciplinary conferences, to be held at the Laing. This is the latest outcome of an established working relationship that continues to generate mutually-beneficial forms of knowledge-exchange, and from which the PhD student will benefit.

## SECTION 2: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

First Supervisor:	Dr Claudine van Hensbergen	School/Department:	Faculty of Arts Design and Social Sciences/Humanities (English)
Second Supervisor:	Prof Ysanne Holt	School/Department:	Faculty of Arts Design and Social Sciences/Arts (History of Art)
Additional Advisor:	Julie Milne	Organisation/Institution:	Laing Art Gallery
Additional Advisor:	Anne Fountain	Organisation/Institution:	Laing Art Gallery

**Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisors will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected student:**  
(Maximum 500 words)

Dr. van Hensbergen (first supervisor) is an interdisciplinary researcher whose work explores intersections between art and literature, most often with a focus on gender. She has published widely on female creatives and female representation in the textual, performative and visual arts. Based in Humanities, van Hensbergen has considerable experience of working on art historical projects and is currently an AHRC Leadership Fellow (Innovation Fund, 2019-2021) with a project delivered in partnership with the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, and Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. The project supports van Hensbergen's research for a monograph, and funds an RA based at the Laing's Learning Team. The AHRC project also underwrites a suite of funded activities including academic conferences, workshops and knowledge-exchange visits. The PhD student will benefit from involvement in these events, which provide academic networking and dissemination opportunities, as well as insight into external partnership work. Van Hensbergen was previously a PDRA based in Tate Britain's Pre-1800 Curatorial Team on the AHRC-funded 'Court, Country, City: British Art, 1660-1735' project run between Tate Britain and York University, and she has publications in the fields of Art History and Literature. She has successfully co-supervised a number of PhDs to completion, including an AHRC Heritage Consortium DTP student working on gallery collections and display.

Prof. Ysanne Holt (second supervisor) has expertise in early twentieth-century British Art History, with a particular focus on the Edwardian and inter-war periods. She was commissioning editor of Tate Britain's 2012 online cataloguing project, 'The Camden Town Group in Context', funded by the Getty Foundation's Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative. She has a strong interest in the social and historical relations between forms of cultural production, and was founding editor of the Routledge journal Visual Culture in Britain. She currently supervises a PhD working on the history of the Laing's collections (1904-1950s).

The applicant's supervision will be strengthened through the addition of two external advisors at the Laing: Julie Milne, Chief Curator, and Anne Fountain, Lead Learning Officer. Milne brings years of programming, curatorial and managerial experience, whilst Fountain brings years of educational-facing experience. Both advisors are closely familiar with the collections, will facilitate access to them, and will advise the applicant on the development of a project exhibition for the Laing and on wider public engagement. Their advisory involvement is essential, enabling these senior staff to perceive benefits to the gallery deriving from the applicant's research as they arise.

The supervisory team have a combined total of 9 PhD completions as first supervisor (Holt 8, van Hensbergen 1). Van Hensbergen has two PhD completions as second supervisor (including an AHRC Heritage Consortium DTP student working on gallery collections and display) and has supervised an MRes student (2018-19) on a fully-funded AHRC Heritage Consortium DTP award working on a dissertation project on the Laing's collections. The MRes student was collaboratively supported through a twelve-month placement at the gallery, mentored by Anne Fountain. The supervisory team have completed all mandatory institutional training in PhD supervision and ethics.

For full supervisory profiles see:

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-staff/v/claudine-van-hensbergen/>

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-staff/h/ysanne-holt/>

### SECTION 3: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

**Please provide details about the research environment the selected student will be joining and its suitability:**

*(Maximum 500 words)*

The student will be joining a rich research environment at Northumbria, facilitating the interdisciplinary and outward-facing nature of the PhD project, and offering a host of postgraduate opportunities for training and professional development. In recent years Northumbria has recruited a new generation of research-active staff and significantly grown its PhD population, securing large research grants (AHRC, Leverhulme Trust) and receiving AHRC funding for PhD studentships through the Art & Design CDT. These awards have been strengthened by external partnerships, with the vibrant interplay between organisations central to the department's culture.

The student's departmental home will be in Humanities, where they will access the wide-ranging opportunities offered through Northumbria's Institute of Humanities. The Institute hosts seminars, conferences and book launches, and offers professional training for postgraduates, access to funds and the free use of premises for postgraduate-led events. Northumbria encourages interdisciplinary exchange between its departments, and the student will have access to the suite of research opportunities offered through the Department of Arts, including membership of the Visual & Material Culture Research Group. Through Arts postgraduates are provided with access to unique facilities including the BxNU Institute of Contemporary Art at Baltic39. Northumbria invests significant research capacity into professional contemporary art, performance and curatorial practices. The university has its own exhibition space, Gallery North, and an impressive art collection used to support teaching, learning and research; all these facilities are available for use by postgraduate students. The student will be given desk space, training and support at the Laing, but they will also access desk space in Northumbria's Glenamara postgraduate study centre and draw on collections held by Northumbria University Library. The student will complete all the mandatory postgraduate training programmes run through the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences. Furthermore, they will be able to extend their engagement with the museum and heritage sector through involvement in broader existing partnerships, including a current Heritage-Lottery funded project (2019-2022) overseeing fifteen cross-disciplinary projects between the Faculty and the National Trust.

Northumbria has a unique relationship with the Laing, and the institutions collaborate on multiple fronts. Dr. van Hensbergen's AHRC project represents a major investment (£191,207) in this relationship, with a project staff member based at the Laing but employed by Northumbria and line-managed by van Hensbergen. The AHRC project supports a suite of funded activities (academic conferences, workshops and knowledge-exchange visits) at the Laing and her sister gallery, The Shipley (Gateshead), and the student will benefit from involvement in these networking and knowledge-sharing events which explore productive partnerships between academics and the museum and gallery sector. Further evidence of a rich research relationship between the Laing and Northumbria abounds. Prof. Holt currently supervises a collaborative PhD student working on the Laing's collections (1904-1950s). This builds on a previous PhD completion for a project working on the Rothschild collections at the Shipley, which led to an extended AHRC Cultural Engagement project making the archive accessible. A 2001 Northumbria doctoral thesis was developed into the Laing's 'hugely' popular Cullercoats colony exhibition (2003).

## Re Research Project Proposal: Histories, Collections and Practice: Gender and the Regional Art Gallery

I am writing to confirm strong support and enthusiasm for the collaborative doctoral research award to Northern Bridge Consortium for 'Histories, Collections and Practice: Gender and the Regional Art Gallery.'

The proposal is in line with the strategic vision for the Laing Art Gallery to reveal the hidden stories behind the well-known and well represented male dominated canon of British Art to redress this imbalance and develop new programmes and practices. It is common with many national and regional collections of art that women artists are underrepresented and we therefore welcome this research across the collections to explore questions around gender representation and interpretation, with a particular focus on regional female artists.

The Chief Curator of Art Galleries, Julie Milne and Learning Officer Anne Fountain will supervise the research at the Laing, and provide support and full access to the collections. To enable the researcher to do their research they will have access to our online collections database and stores.

We intend that the research will have tangible outcomes including a new collection display at the Laing and the research will inform interpretation of permanent collection displays at the Laing Art Gallery and impact on the acquisition policy.

At the galleries, the successful candidate will undertake training and development crucial to a future career in curating. The supervisors and the art galleries team will enable a holistic understanding of gallery practice within the current economic, socio and political challenges facing the sector. The researcher will also have access to training opportunities within the wider Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Service, including development, trading, collections and conservation teams which will prove invaluable to support their personal development. Desk space is available for use at the Laing Art Gallery in the curatorial office.

Laing Art Gallery  
New Bridge Street  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8AG

telephone: (0191) 232 7734

textphone: 18001 0191 232 7734

fax: (0191) 222 0952

email: [laing@twmuseums.org.uk](mailto:laing@twmuseums.org.uk)

website: [www.twmuseums.org.uk/laing](http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/laing)

TYNE & WEAR  
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Newcastle  
City Council



MLA Renaissance  
North East



We would also seek to support a six-month placement at either a regional or national gallery to enable follow up research in more depth as well as providing the opportunity for development of knowledge and skills around the practice of regional and national institutions. Julie Milne is a member of the steering group of the national subject specialist network of British Art led by Tate and is in a good position to broker a placement at a national gallery.

Currently we do not have the capacity to fully realise the potential of our designated collections, therefore we whole heartedly support this application as this research will prove invaluable in opening up knowledge and understanding to inform the future creative direction for each of the galleries.

Yours Sincerely,



Julie Milne  
Chief Curator of Art Galleries



Anne Fountain  
Learning Officer