

TATE ENCOUNTERS:

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The project is an interdisciplinary research collaboration between Tate Britain (which holds the National Collection of British Art), London South Bank University (the Social Policy and Urban Regeneration Research Institute and within it the Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group) and Wimbledon School of Art/University of the Arts, (which brings together fine art practice and visual cultural studies).

The project will produce in-depth case studies of how fifty first year undergraduate students and their families encounter Tate Britain and the National Collection of British Art over a two year period. The project will recruit family participation through first year undergraduate students at LSBU, who are the first generation of their family to attend higher education and whose family migrated to the UK over the passed three generations. The project will use innovative research methods, based in ethnographic study, which will include the participants in defining the field of study and foregrounding their perspectives within the public context of Tate's programme.

The project aims to provide an in-depth account of the reciprocal meanings of a sustained encounter between a diasporic group and an important national cultural site. The project will develop new knowledge and understandings of how narratives of Britishness are contained, constructed and reproduced within the curatorial practices and collection of Tate and of how such notions are received and valued by different migrant and diasporic family members within the context of the active material/visual cultural practices of everyday life. From this encounter the project will develop new curatorial and educational perspectives relevant to wider and more

culturally diverse audiences and will contribute towards cultural change within the Museum and Galleries sector.

The research problematic draws upon the growing recognition that advocacy for greater cultural diversity within the life of museums has been policy led with the consequence that museums have responded with strategies and programmes which lack the benefit of an evidential knowledge base of how people of migrant and diasporic backgrounds value and interact with national museums and collections. Policy led initiatives based upon how 'social capital' functions to exclude sections of society from participation in culture have led to museum educational practice centred on outreach projects aimed at establishing links with traditionally excluded groups. Critical curatorial practice has simultaneously engaged with theoretical perspectives drawn from post-colonial and visual cultural theory which foreground diasporic cultural histories and experience. This project will provide an evidential base form which to test the underlying assumptions of policy and practice.

The project will be of direct benefit to curators, museum educators and staff and students of museum studies in providing an analysis of a diasporic and migrant audience's engagement with permanent collections and temporary displays. The final evaluation report, will be of direct use to policy makers, opinion formers and stakeholders in the sector when considering future cultural diversity policy and funding initiatives.