



Gallery Volunteers - In Training for a Heroine Gods House Tower – Southampton



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Overview

Role Title: Gallery Volunteer

Hours: Variable and offered on a casual basis; up to a maximum of 16 hours across 2 days

Duration: September 2024 - February 2025

Location: God's House Tower, Town Quay Road, Southampton, SO14 2NY

Role Summary

Our front of house team are an integral part of delivering our vision for the venue, ensuring an outstanding experience for all visitors by undertaking an active and involved customer focused role. This is an exciting time to join our front of house team as a gallery volunteer on a temporary basis as we prepare for an internationally significant exhibition at the start of Jane Austen's 250th anniversary year; *In training for a Heroine*.

In training for a Heroine features Jane Austen's travelling writing desk on loan from the British Library, as well as a new commission by a contemporary artist, offering audiences an opportunity to interpret Austen through a contemporary lens and explore the wit, wisdom and legacy of Austen while also challenging pre-conceived ideas of her work. This is a really exciting opportunity for God's House Tower to align itself with this internationally significant event, kickstarting Jane Austen's 250th anniversary year in Southampton.

Our aim is to recruit a pool of flexible and reliable individuals on a temporary, casual basis to support the wider front of house team with delivering an excellent experience to all visitors over the course of the exhibition. You will be part of a small team of volunteer invigilators and together be responsible for greeting visitors, invigilating the galleries and assisting with visitor flow. This role is the perfect fit for a reliable and engaging person who is committed to our work and ethos and will support the venue in this exciting opportunity.

We are looking for individuals who are friendly and approachable, interested in arts and heritage, and who will fully engage with the training provided to ensure that they are well equipped to assist visitors, answer questions and add value to visitors experience of GHT.

As a charity the time which volunteers give to supporting the delivery of our programme and wider mission is invaluable and goes a huge way to helping us support artists and audiences and helping us to create a city where creativity can flourish.

Roles and Responsibilities

- To undertake an involved front of house role, engaging with the public and answering questions and sharing your knowledge of the artwork on display
- To provide a helpful, friendly and professional welcome to visitors as a key point of contact for the venue and assisting with collecting audience feedback.
- To ensure that all public areas of the building are well presented, artwork is displayed and cared for correctly and ensure capacity limits are adhered to where appropriate.
- To be an involved and engaging member of the team who empowers others to be the same, sharing information on exhibitions and upcoming events whenever possible and remaining vigilant to visitors needs in the venue, ensuring an exceptional visitor experience
- To attend team training sessions in the run up to this exhibition as well as team meetings, contributing thoughts and ideas to ensure an excellent visitor experience.

What you can gain from a volunteer role

- An opportunity to be involved with a unique opportunity for arts and culture in Southampton with this significant loan opportunity from the British Library along with an insight into the running of a contemporary and unique gallery space
- An opportunity to make new connections with a team of likeminded people who are all invested in art and culture in Southampton
- In depth training around the historical significance of Jane Austen, her legacy and connection to Southampton
- An opportunity to engage with the public, develop skills and confidence in interacting with the public, gallery invigilation and visitor welcome
- An opportunity to try something new, learn new skills and people in the unique setting of GHT

Person Specification

The ideal candidates will be enthusiastic with good team working skills and a desire to work in a customer focused way in a heritage, arts and cultural environment.

They will be an excellent communicator, flexible and confident in their approach to problem solving and have a friendly and professional manner.

Reporting

Gallery volunteers will be line managed the Venue Manager, and will be supervised by the Front of House Manager during shifts.

Key Dates

Applications open: Monday 5th August

Applications close: Thursday 19th September, 9am

Volunteer recruitment day: Friday 11th October, 10am - 1pm

Training day: Thursday 24th October, 10am - 6pm

All team meeting: Wednesday 13th November, pm

Exhibition opens: Thursday 14th November

Christmas Closure: Monday 23rd December - Wednesday 8th January

Exhibition reopens: Thursday 9th January

Exhibition ends: Sunday 23rd February

Training days are essential to ensure that we are fully prepared to open the exhibition to the public and ensure an excellent experience for our visitors.

How to Apply

To apply for an invigilator role please complete the application form [HERE](#)

If you would like to complete this application in another format please get in touch with hannah@spacearts.org.uk and we can discuss your needs to assist you in the application stage.

Access

As an organisation we actively look to reduce barriers for people applying for our opportunities and commissions, and we are committed to being fair, accessible, transparent and inclusive.

We offer a range of access support for including alternative formats for information we release and submissions we receive as well as an artist access fund; please contact us so that we can discuss your individual needs and provide appropriate support for your application or project. Please either email us on enquiries@spacearts.org.uk or call 07824326005

For more information about this work please visit - spacearts.org.uk/about-us

About GHT

God's House Tower (GHT) opened to the public in September 2019 with a dynamic programme of exhibitions, events and activities. Through inventive and imaginative programming GHT shares and celebrates its' own special Southampton story through the permanent exhibition 'stories behind the stones.' Our changing programme of exhibitions and activities create opportunities for artists and audiences, open up conversations and create access for those facing barriers to heritage and culture. The programme empowers communities to be creators and develop a lifelong interest in arts and culture, along with diversifying Southampton's creative community and creating role models to inspire a new generation of diverse creative communities in the city.

For more information about GHT please visit - godshousetower.org.uk

About 'a space' arts

Established in 2000, by artists for artists, 'a space' arts is the visual arts organisation leading on a range of artist development projects, including the Arches and Tower House studios, God's House Tower, the RIPE programme, along with offering a bespoke range of Artist Resources.

Artist development at the heart of all of our projects and we deliver our mission of supporting visual artists and inspiring audiences in enterprising ways. All of our work and venues including Victorian railway arches and Medieval monuments supporting delivering our mission. The organisation is a registered charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

For more further information and an overview of our work please visit - aspacearts.org.uk

For project specific information please visit - godshousetower.org.uk and ripesouthampton.org.uk

Anti-racism

To further our mission we are taking proactive steps to becoming an anti-racist organisation. We have pledged to deliver a number of commitments through our Anti-Racism Action Plan over the next two years along with a series of activities to bring immediate benefits to global majority artists. We feel this combination of working towards long-term change and immediate action can make a real difference to Southampton's global majority visual artists and we plan to continue working on this dual approach.

For more information about this work please visit - aspacearts.org.uk/about-us

A note on terminology

- We acknowledge language is fluid and evolving and aim to ensure our use of language remains inclusive and inoffensive.
- As an organisation we have joined the movement to reject the acronym BAME as this state-manufactured term flattens and depoliticises global solidarity between people with a lived experiences of racism.
- We acknowledge the term 'people of global majority' as it is factually true with over 80% of the world's population making up the global majority of non-white peoples.

Climate Action

As a cultural organisation it is our responsibility to raise awareness, as well as reducing and mitigating our own environmental impact. The environmental impact of this commission will be closely monitored and steps will be taken to reduce CO₂ emissions where appropriate.

Appendix 1: Introduction and Context to the exhibition

From November 2024 - February 2025, Jane Austen's travelling writing desk will be exhibited at God's House Tower, on loan from the British Library. The portable, mahogany desk was designed to fold into a case for ease of traveling, and was gifted to Jane Austen around the time of her 19th birthday by her father, George Austen. Exactly 230 years later, the desk will be at the heart of a year-long celebration of Jane Austen's 250th birthday in Southampton, and across the world.

Jane Austen knew Southampton well. She first visited the city (though it was a town at the time) when she was just 7 years old and then returned in 1793 when she was 17. Soon after, Austen began writing an early draft of her mock-gothic novel *Northanger Abbey*, which was eventually published posthumously in 1818.

For about three years, between 1806 and 1809, Austen lived in Southampton in a house on Castle Square. The house was on the grounds of a mock-gothic castle, built by the Marquess of Lansdowne, on the site of the medieval Southampton Castle. The garden was enclosed by the old town walls which still stand today.

During her time in Southampton, Jane Austen wrote a number of letters which have been transcribed and published. They are mostly addressed to her sister Cassandra, Austen's closest friend and confidante, who decided to preserve the letters that she considered important - particularly ones that relate to Austen's work and writing.

Of the letters that Jane Austen wrote from Southampton, there is one of particular interest addressed to the publishing house Crosby & Co, who had purchased an early version of *Northanger Abbey* (titled 'Susan' at the time) in 1803. Austen writes to demand the publication or return of her manuscript under the assumed name of Mrs Ashton Dennis, declaring herself the 'Authoress' (drawing attention to her gender and the power-dynamics at play) and signing off with the initials M.A.D, making her anger known.

This letter will be featured alongside the travelling writing desk in the Barker-Mill Project Space at God's House Tower. Illustrations will bring the room to life visually and interpretation panels will provide visitors with information about the desk itself. The exhibition will tell the story of Jane Austen as a young, ambitious writer at the very beginning of her career - the travelling writing desk symbolising a world of opportunity and possibility.