

Introduction

Please find to follow a section from my PhD application which outlines my proposal. This practice based PhD is in partnership with [University of the West of England](#) and [Arnolfini](#), supported by a [Collaborative 3D3 Studentship Award](#). For more information, including updates about my research, please go to my website www.francesbossom.com

The title for your proposed *practice-led* programme of research:

Digital Transformations: The History and Future of Gallery Education in the Context of Participatory Media

Please make your **case for support** in **two** sections below (*total of 6000 characters for both sections together, including spaces, in Arial font no smaller than size 11*).

Section 1: Please provide a full proposal for your PhD project including its aims and objectives, research methodology, and potential applications and outcomes.

Section 2. Please explain your reasons for undertaking this project and its significance or importance as research. Outline how your experience, skills, and knowledge are relevant to and have prepared you for the proposed project.

Potential Outcomes

I will describe & measure the effects of an action research project, that animates the archive, with co-produced oral history, reunions & re-enactments, & culminates in an exhibition & co-designed participatory archive¹.

Aims

- Critically assess the changing role of digital practices within the expanded fields of gallery education & cultural co-production.
- Generate new understandings of the ways digital practices can augment, extend & inter-relate with physical encounters.
- Examine how re-enactment within digital platforms might challenge conventions of the past & present in archives.

Objectives

- Undertake detailed item research & map; key people networks, events, sites & locations
- Co-produce new acts of gallery education that activate the archive & digital technologies
- Diversify the archive through involving a range of participants
- Engage potential users, & subjects (or people in the archive itself), to co-design the archive
- Test the functionality & potential application of collaborative digital platforms (e.g. [Graph Commons](#), [Zooniverse](#)) & location based apps

Research Questions

New Models of Co-production

In what ways can co-produced digital cultures evolve & map new modes of communication, exchange & socially constructed knowledge? What are the risks & opportunities for public arts institutions when co-producing & co-designing with networked communities? What adjustments do arts institutions need to make as they toward co-production?

Physical & Digital

How can the physical augment the digital? How can offline participatory experiences effect online experience (& vice versa)? How can site-specific oral history recordings, re-enactments & digital culture work together to, collapse time & bring the past into play with the present? What happens when re-enactment is moved from one media into another?

Access & Diversity

Who is the digital archive for & who should be involved in co-producing it? Whose voices are missing? What facilitation & support are necessary offline to ensure a diverse public can contribute to the digital participatory archive?

¹ I define participatory archives to be digital archives, where potential users, & in this case subjects or people in the archive itself, take part in process of building the archive.

Research Methodologies

My approach is informed by my background as a gallery educator & wider discourses around digital culture, co-production, archival science, oral history, re-enactment & live art. As with Live Art, Gallery education encompasses diverse practices that create experiences which tend to be temporal, embodied & site specific. These qualities can make it challenging to research past events. E.g. when I visited the archive, I found papers that were mainly, produced & edited internally. On closer inspection I began to find details that could be debated, re-enacted & traced including; hastily hand-written notes alluding to disagreements, evocative photographs of radical actions & lists of project participants I could readily track down. I am concerned with disrupting what Sara Torres Vega refers to as the *'institutional memory'*² of gallery education archives, by enabling a range of other voices to permeate & augment the contents, including those whose perspectives & experiences are currently; absent, forgotten, hidden, ephemeral or lost. Rebecca Schneider³ writes extensively about performing remains from the past, both in the context of live art and historical re-enactment. Professor Gabriella Giannachi suggests that whilst developing a *'digital heritage'*⁴ project, it is essential to *'broker information gathering'* and *'ensure participation'* through participatory facilitation that is not online. I propose identifying; artists, educators, audiences, participants, staff and other stakeholders from the archive, & collaborating with them to animate what remains in Arnolfini's education archive. Together we will test what happens when re-enactments, oral histories & co-production are brought into play with location-based apps & collaborative platforms, & co-design a prototype archive. Relevant projects include [Urban Archive](#) & the [Cartography Research Project](#).

Reasons for Applying

This PhD would not only enable me to consolidate my experience, & learn new skills, but make a critical contribution to a sector I have worked in throughout my professional career.

Research Significance

This timely study will produce new insights in the fields of; gallery education, cultural policy, digital culture, socially engaged arts practice & for archival science across disciplines. Arnolfini is currently in the process of transforming itself; the focus of my research aligns with the centre's [New Rules](#) agenda, HLF funded *Enjoy Yourself – Arnolfini's Social History*, & national inquiries including the [Inquiry into the Civic Role of Cultural Organisation](#) (2017) & [The Ecologies of Culture Report](#) (2015). This project connects with ideas [Tate Research Centre: Learning](#) (UK) & [MoMA](#) (USA) are exploring around digital culture, archives & cultural learning experiences.

Experience, Skills, & Knowledge

I have extensive first-hand experience of working in education at Arnolfini from 1995 - 2009, (as a freelance gallery educator & member of staff). Working with the public, across Arnolfini's programmes, under three directors, with international artists, curators, producers, theatre companies & performers has enabled me to experience some of the seismic shifts in curating, co-production, learning, digital culture & socially engaged practice. I have also worked with several national cultural & educational organisations, alongside collaborating creatively with practitioners from a range of disciplines.

Character Count:

(Maximum Total of 6000 characters including spaces and returns AND any references).

IMPORTANT: IF YOU GO OVER THE LIMIT OF 6000 CHARACTERS (QUESTION 7 - SECTIONS 1 AND 2 COMBINED), YOU WILL BE DISQUALIFIED FROM THE STUDENTSHIP COMPETITION

5999 (including footnotes)

² Torres Vega S, *Archiving the Uncollectable Museum Education & Memory Loss*, 2015, retrieved from [link](#)

³ Schneider R, *Performing Remains, Art & War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment*, Routledge, 2011

⁴ Giannachi G, et al, *The Cartography Project Conference Paper*, 2017, retrieved from [link](#)