PUBLIC HUMANITIES INITIATIVE IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION
2023-2024 FELLOWSHIPS

**JOB TITLE:** NYU Public Humanities Curatorial Fellow

**ORGANIZATION:** Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art

**LOCATION:** 1050 Independence Ave., SW, Washington DC 20013-7012

**ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art, The Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, is located on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Committed to preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting exemplary works of art, the museum houses exceptional collections of Asian art, with more than 42,000 objects dating from the Neolithic period to today. Renowned and iconic objects originate from China, Japan, Korea, South Asia and Southeast Asia, the ancient Near East, and the Islamic world. The Freer Gallery also holds a significant collection of American art, with the world’s largest collection of works by James McNeill Whistler, including the famed Peacock Room.

The museum is dedicated to increasing our understanding of the arts of Asia through a broad portfolio of exhibitions, publications, conservation, research, and education. The museum is free and open to the public.

**POSITION DESCRIPTION**

*Sharing Stewardship: Exhibiting Paintings from the Pushtimarg Tradition*

How do museums open up to and incorporate multiple producers of knowledge from heritage communities to artists? In 2025, the National Museum of Asian Art will open an exhibition of pichwai paintings from its collections. Created in the 19th and early 20th centuries, these monumental works on cloth formed part of a temple experience that included sound, scents, and foods to delight a fully immanent god. The Hindu tradition, known as Pushtimarg, is a living tradition, with temples and devotees in the United States as well as India.

We seek a Public Humanities Fellow for academic year 23-24 to join the South Asia curator in working with an advisory group of Hindus, scholars, curators, conservators, and artists. In addition to helping draft the exhibition concept and plan, the
applicant will develop bibliographies, attend exhibition planning meetings and produce short texts and presentations. The position is ideal for an art history, South Asian studies, or religion major, or a graduate student with Hindi language skills.

To embed the fellow into the exhibition process, the fellow will participate in meetings of the Museum’s internal project team and the advisory committees.

**SCHEDULE**

The twenty hours per week fellowship will include both virtual and residential components. We anticipate hand-crafting an on-site schedule that may shift as the academic year progresses and accommodates the fellow’s ability to live in or commute to DC. A fellow located in Washington D.C. will spend more time engaged with exhibition design and conservation, and will work closely with staff in various departments. A fellow working virtually will be more focused on research and liaising with community groups. Either way, the fellow will work both independently and collaboratively.

Beyond the fellowship project, DC’s institutions, including the National Museum of Asian art, other Smithsonian museums and archives, and the Library of Congress offer excellent primary and secondary sources for broader learning, research, and writing.

**GOALS**

- Learn first-hand about engaging diverse audiences, particularly by translating research into nuanced presentations for multiple audiences.
- Gain an understanding of how museums implement public humanities strategies.
- Serve as liaison between the museum staff and heritage communities who may have very different ideas on how to frame and narrate objects.
- Learn to navigate and exploit the potential of the changing landscape of art museums in the twenty-first century.
- Grow a network of professional contacts through meaningful online and in-person interactions.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

- Excellent writing and research skills
- Good interpersonal communication skills
- A commitment to sharing nuanced information with diverse audiences
- Flexibility and an interest in working collaboratively
- Coursework or background in Art History, Hinduism, South Asian Studies or fluency in Hindi

Visit gsas.nyu.edu/public-humanities-initiative.html to learn more about the Public Humanities Initiative in Doctoral Education program. This position is only available through this program; please do not contact the host organization directly.
SPECIFIC APPLICATION QUESTION

How do you see your strengths supporting the curatorial goals of creating an engaged art history? What past experiences or research interests have motivated you to apply for a fellowship that focuses on South Asian paintings and Hindu religiosity, and how might those be useful for enriching the development of the exhibition?