

Curatorial Research Assistant

The Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound, Ontario is seeking a Curatorial Research Assistant to work with the Senior Curator and curatorial team. This is an auspicious time for a student pursuing a degree in art history, studio art or curatorial studies to gain valuable experience and contribute in a real way to the success of the curatorial team over this summer. 2017 represents a very important year for The Tom Thomson Art Gallery, packed with ambitious exhibitions and other specifically developed programming to mark the 50th anniversary of the Gallery, the 100th anniversary of Thomson's death and the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Under the direction and research goals of the Senior Curator, the Curatorial Research Assistant will research on Canadian art, artists and history for an exhibition project that explores the less commonly known or frankly ignored histories of Indigenous peoples, immigrants, women, LGBTQ, war, English and French settlers, the Canadian landscape and ecologic concerns — in essence, our country's stories of pride and shame and the contemporary Canadian artists who explore those stories in their work. The Curatorial Research Assistant will research and collect data through library and Internet research, and possibly structured interviews or other project specific methodology. S/he will interpret and synthesize, and hopefully make connections to other collected data/stories. The work developed here will form the basis of an exhibition that will take place in 2020 and is expected to tour the country.

In addition to this research, the Curatorial Research Assistant will provide support to the Senior Curator related to all aspects of developing exhibitions from initial concept through presentation, as well as on-going practical aspects of exhibitions maintenance. The Curatorial Research Assistant will also work with the Curator of Temporary Exhibitions to assist with organization and installation of several Canadian Spirit off-site art projects. S/he will be introduced to exhibition planning and the role that exhibitions play whether within the Gallery or off-site.

The Curatorial Research Assistant will benefit from the mentorship of several highly-experienced museum professionals and will gain knowledge related to the complexity of the functions of a contemporary art museum. The Assistant will learn both long-term planning and the practical aspects of developing and mounting exhibitions. The skills acquired through this opportunity will be applicable to further studies, and later, in entry-level positions at public and commercial galleries.

In addition to gaining an understanding of the various steps necessary to research, plan, produce and mount an exhibition, whether on-site or off-site, the Curatorial Research Assistant will also assist the Exhibitions Coordinator and his team of preparators with unpacking, installation and label production during a change-over between exhibitions. S/he will also be trained to act as an occasional docent for "Betwixt & Between: An Untold Tom Thomson Story," a multi-faceted, fully immersive, interactive exhibition designed to tie the story of Canadian artist Tom Thomson (1877-1917) with the often overlooked history of the First Nations peoples of the Bruce Peninsula. The exhibition challenges the notion of authenticity of museum institutions and incorporates fully interactive Augmented Reality and gaming technologies that link to four additional locations in Southern Ontario.

The Curatorial Research Assistant will receive supervision and training from professional Gallery staff and will develop specific skills in communicating concepts about art, working with the public, marketing and Web publishing, project development and management, and most particularly, in research and writing. The Curatorial Research Assistant will also be expected to publish an 800-word article about an exhibition presented by the Gallery for The Sun Times (Owen Sound newspaper).

The Senior Curator is fluently bilingual and would be equally comfortable in working with a candidate whose mother tongue is French and having him/her Assistant produce the research in either English or French. The 800-word article would be equally welcome in French for a French publication. However, the candidate will need to have good oral facility of English in order to communicate with other staff.

The Tom Thomson Art Gallery (The TOM) is a national cultural attraction, dedicated to the innovation and spirit of iconic artist Tom Thomson (1877 – 1917), strongly identified with the Group of Seven whose images are virtually synonymous with the very idea of ‘Canada.’ Our national identity is forged and fortified by our awareness and understanding of historical figures like Thomson, whose artwork has been described as being the “visual equivalent of our national anthem.”

With over 50,000 visitors each year, and another 70,000 visitors to our off-site programming (both of which are expected to double this year), the TOM is the region’s main disseminator of contemporary art and provides a unique experience for its audiences. The TOM celebrates excellence in the visual arts locally, nationally and internationally, through exhibitions of historical and contemporary art, education programs and the enrichment and interpretation of its significant permanent collection. The TOM supports Thomson’s legacy through programs such as “Canadian Spirit” involving galleries, organizations and businesses across the country. The Gallery acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Chippewas of Nawash and Saugeen First Nation and works closely with First Nations artists and communities to develop and exhibit contemporary Aboriginal artists and to ensure that First Nations are part of the artistic and social dialogue of all of our programming wherever possible.

In this dynamic place where audiences and art merge, the Gallery’s award-winning educational programmes foster a life-long enjoyment and appreciation of art and its creation. Using a variety of interpretive techniques, both traditional and innovative, we cultivate this relationship between our visitors and art. Exhibitions are accompanied by informative materials and tours are conducted by trained guides. Interactive displays, demonstrations and new technologies enable us to reach new audiences in exciting ways, showcasing the art of today and influencing the art of tomorrow. Admission to the TOM is free and all of our educational community programming is also free.

Ideally, the Candidate will have:

- Excellent research skills
- Excellent communication skills in written and oral forms
- Strong interest in contemporary Canadian art
- Good knowledge of Canadian history
- Ability to work independently and to be self-directed
- Strong interpersonal skills – for communication with Gallery patrons, staff and artists
- Ability to work with a team and/or with diverse groups of people
- Open to taking direction and a willingness to learn
- Organized yet adaptable
- A keen attention to detail and the ability to multi-task;
- Microsoft Office, Website publishing, and social media
- Bilingualism in both official languages is an asset (Senior Curator is fluently bilingual. Written work may be conducted in either language but candidate must have intermediate verbal comfort in English).

The applicant will have either an art history and studio arts training or a museum studies background. A solid education in art history will provide context in the understanding of contemporary art, Canadian history in order to research contemporary artists whose works are informed by historic and current events in this country. In addition to this experience and aptitude, a background in studio art means that the Curatorial Research Assistant comes with experience (or at least prior knowledge) on artistic/material processes and how they can inform an artist's creative process. A candidate with a background in both of these fields will understand the importance of doing any assigned task with accuracy and conscientiousness and s/he will have a predisposition to have great respect for both museum standards and the artworks being handled.

Preference will be given to candidates pursuing a Master's Degree in Fine Arts, Museum Studies or Art History or are entering their fourth year of a Bachelor's program in these fields. However, all candidates with the above skills are strongly encouraged to apply.

The successful candidate must be eligible to work under the Young Canada Works program from Canadian Heritage. S/he will be paid \$11.40 per hour and will work 35 hours per week for 12 weeks ideally beginning June 5, 2017.

Applications including a resume and cover letter must be received in writing by May 22, 2017 to:

Christian Bernard Singer
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The Gallery is an equal opportunity employer committed to providing accommodation in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.