



Out of the comfort zone: Exploring sensitive issues

**Visitor Studies Group AGM and one day conference
at the British Museum**

1 February 2008 10.00-16.00

Too book: www.visitors.org.uk

Recent years have witnessed a period of reflection for museums and cultural organisations as they have sought to meet diverse demands and become representative of a diversity of audiences. The new challenge involves integrating previously excluded voices, write histories from differing perspectives and reflect multiple cultural identities. To this end museums and cultural and natural heritage institutions increasingly have to engage in research into sensitive issues, often of a political, social and ethical nature.

This one day conference will focus on visitor research which examines sensitive issues and conflicting ideas. Such issues may include areas that are very private and personal and subjects that some might feel uncomfortable to discuss or researchers might find difficult to ask about. The conference will consider how sensitive areas can be explored in a meaningful and appropriate way. Through a variety of case-studies and practical advice it will seek answer to the following questions:

- *How can general concerns and questions about difficult issues be dealt with?*
- *How can evaluation generate meaningful exchange among diverse people on sensitive issues?*
- *How can the values and agendas of differentiated audiences be researched with sensitivity, so that powerful relationships are forged, new voices are heard and new narratives are created?*
- *How can exploring sensitive issues provide opportunities for bringing people together so making institutions more inclusive and accessible?*

Speakers include:

Jim Broughton - *Head of Interpretation*, The British Museum, London

Julia Cassim - *Senior Research Fellow*, Royal College of Art, London

Michelle Foggett - *New Audience Advocate*, Science Museum, London

Frazer Swift - *Head of Learning & Lucie Amos - Head of Community & Audience Development*, Museum of London, London

Who is it for?

Museum, cultural, and natural heritage professionals, audience researchers, students, and all those with an interest in how visitor research can inform interpretation and foster decision-making to the benefit of their institutions.

Benefits for the audience:

- *Opportunities for learning to increase their confidence in approaching sensitive areas*
- *Practical guidelines for conducting their own research in the area of sensitive issues*
- *Improving their own practices through learning from others*
- *Expertise and examples through case-studies*
- *A forum for discussion in order to share ideas, thoughts, experiences and concerns*
- *Networking opportunities*