

'Portraits of crime? The ethics of displaying real lives and people' online event 7 December 2021, 11:00-14:00 GMT

Full event details <https://www.capcollections.org.uk/cap-events/>
<https://www.britishportraits.org.uk/events/portraits-of-crime-the-ethics-of-displaying-real-lives-and-people/>

Chairpersons' bios

Chairperson and speaker

Professor Heather Shore, Professor of History, Manchester Metropolitan University has published widely in the field of crime and penal history. Her research encompasses the history of youth offending, the historical evolution of the idea of the criminal underworld, and British organised crime in the interwar period of the twentieth century. She also co-coordinated, with Prof. Helen Johnston (Hull), the Our Criminal Past research network and Our Criminal Ancestors public engagement project (both funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council).

Heather is the author of two monographs, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Boydell, 1999) and *London's Criminal Underworlds, c. 1720 - c. 1930: A Social and Cultural History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). More recently, she was the co-author of *Young Criminal Lives: Life Courses from 1850* (with Godfrey, Cox and Alker, OUP, 2017). She has led and collaborated on awards from the AHRC, ESRC, British Academy and Leverhulme Trust. Heather has been co-convenor of History UK (HUK) and is currently co-editor of the Royal Historical Society's New Historical Perspectives book series.

Chairperson and event programmer

Dr Angie Sutton-Vane spent many years working for museums, art galleries and archives, interspersed with periods of study during which she completed a BSc in Conservation and Restoration, an MRes in Material Culture and a funded PhD in History. This doctoral research was inspired by her most recent curatorial role for a police museum in that, using files from the police archive, it examines how police forces preserve, or do not preserve records for future research. Angie fell through the 'educational net' first time around and so is passionate about life-long learning, the interplay between archives and museums and how 'things' can be employed as historical narrators. She now divides her time between academic research as a visiting fellow in the Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice at the Open University, freelance work and writing. She is also Chair of the Crime and Punishment Collections Network.

Speakers' abstract and bios

Corinne Brazier, Heritage Manager, West Midlands Police Museum

In focus: West Midlands Police mugshot collection

Birmingham City Police was the first police force in the UK to start taking mugshots of prisoners, back in the 1850s. By the 1870s, all forces were mandated to do so under the 1871 Prevention of Crime Act.

The West Midlands Police Museum holds what is believed to be the largest mugshot collection of any UK police force, with approximately 9,000 individual photographs. Spanning over 100 years, these images are a key part of the museum's collection and feature regularly in news articles and social media posts, and will have their own permanent display in the new museum. This presentation will cover the history of the mugshot in Birmingham, outline the museum's collection and explain how it is being preserved, before commenting on potential future usage of the images.

Corinne Brazier has worked for West Midlands Police in different roles since 2005. Originally a Criminal Records Bureau Vetting Clerk before becoming a DNA administrator, Corinne became the force's first Records Manager in 2007, developing retention policies, data quality tools and setting up the Information Assurance Team. In 2015 she began volunteering for the force's museum, taking an interest in historic records and digitisation. After becoming a Demand Champion in 2016, supporting the Estates Department to manage the force's buildings, Corinne was naturally involved in trying to identify a new home for the museum when it was announced its old home would be sold. Since 2017 Corinne has been working full-time on the force's heritage project, identifying a new home for the museum and securing funding to deliver its relocation and transformation. In 2020 a new role of Heritage Manager was created to manage the museum permanently and Corinne was successful in securing this role. The [West Midlands Police Museum](#) is due to re-open in Spring 2021

Fiona Curran, Director of Arts, Koestler Arts

Portraiture as practiced by those in secure settings – the Koestler Arts experience

Koestler Arts is one of the UK's best known arts in criminal justice charities. The charity has been motivating people in prisons, secure hospitals, immigration centres and other secure settings, as well as people on probation and community sentences, to participate in the arts since 1962. There are now over 52 artforms to attract participants across music, film & animation, writing, craft, design and fine art. Every entrant gets feedback and a certificate, and many are awarded cash awards, participate in mentoring, or benefit from having their work showcased through events, publications and exhibitions across the UK. Many entrants to the Koestler Awards experience benefits to their wellbeing and self-esteem, learn new skills, and gain qualifications through their engagement with the arts, and the charity offers mentoring for some entrants after release. Every year over 7,000 unique and surprising works are submitted to the Koestler Awards. The portrait category is no different. The category attracts around 500 entries annually and encompasses self-portraits, portraits of people around the establishments such as staff and other residents, family members from photographs, and public figures. Every style is represented including abstract, photo-realistic and conceptual works. Entrants to the Koestler Awards often use self-portraiture to examine their situation and their feelings. Koestler self-portraits, therefore, often show artists honestly and openly looking at their current situation and state of mind, making this a particularly engaging category of the Koestler Awards.

Fiona Curran joined Koestler Arts to produce the charity's first exhibition outside of London, part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, in 2009. Since then, she has developed the charity's artistic programme for both entrants and audiences, often through partnerships with museums, galleries and artists. There are now several Koestler exhibitions annually, as well as film and literature events, talks, displays and publications. Experimenting with who holds the power to present the wonderful Koestler Arts entries to the public has been a particular interest for Fiona – with curatorial projects led by guests including Antony Gormley, Sarah Lucas, Camille Walala, Bob & Roberta Smith, Soweto Kinch, Lady Unchained, prisoners' families, Youth Offending Teams, victims of crime and serving prisoners.

Before joining Koestler Arts, Fiona worked for arts organisations Asia House and Paintings in Hospitals. She has a BA Hons in Drawing and Painting from Edinburgh College of Art and a Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Art History from Goldsmiths.

Professor Helen Johnston, Programme Director MA Criminal Justice & Crime Control; Co-Director of Centre for Criminology & Criminal Justice; Department of Criminology & Sociology, University of Hull

Arresting images: ethics, photography and the Victorian/Edwardian criminal justice system

In recent years, museums, archives and the heritage sector have increasingly used the 'public' spaces of the internet to display historical collections of criminal photographs or 'mugshot' books and prison photos. These collections are a striking visual way to engage the public, many of whom are interested in family and local community history. Indeed, this may be the only 'image' that exists of their ancestor. Yet there has been little consideration of the ethical implications of their use, either in museum and archive displays, curated websites or through social media sites. This presentation will raise questions about the use of photographs in engaging the public in criminal justice history and explore the competing tensions and ethical issues raised by the production of the photos themselves and the presentation and dissemination of them today.

Professor Helen Johnston, University of Hull, is an expert in the history of crime and punishment from 1750. She has undertaken extensive research on local prisons, convict prisons and licensing/early release mechanisms in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, researching the experiences of both prisoners and staff. She is interested in crime and criminal justice heritage, prison architecture and the preservation, presentation and dissemination of crime heritage in museums, archives and heritage sites. She has been Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator on a range of funded research projects supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council, the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust. She maintains www.ourcriminalancestors.org, a public engagement website to help those researching crime, policing and punishment historically.

Jackie Keily, freelance curator and writer

Peopling the Crime Museum Uncovered: the role of portraits in personalising an exhibition narrative

Portraits – in any medium – have the ability to engage the viewer, and develop and enrich exhibition narratives. In 2015 the Museum of London curated an exhibition of the Metropolitan Police's Crime Museum, using objects from the latter's collections. Many of these objects were weapons or evidential items. The challenges for the curatorial team were how to humanise the exhibition and bring the people concerned to the fore. Portraits of those involved in the crimes – the victims, criminals, investigators, and witnesses – became a key part of the content and design of the exhibition. Some of these portraits came from the collections of the Crime Museum, others were sourced externally as supporting images. The use of portraits and their role in the exhibition became a key factor in our discussions about the ethics of display.

Jackie Keily worked at the Museum of London as a curator and then senior curator for over 15 years. Prior to this she worked as an archaeologist. In 2015 she co-curated 'The Crime Museum Uncovered', and co-authored the accompanying book, both with Julia Hoffbrand. Since then, she has curated several other major exhibitions. In 2020 she left the Museum to work as a freelance curator, editor and writer, and is currently working on a book and exhibition. Jackie has an MA in Museum Studies from University College London and is an Associate of the Museums Association, for whom she is also a mentor.

Professor Heather Shore, Manchester Metropolitan University

Picturing Infamy: From Portrait to Mugshot

This paper will explore the various mediums of portraying the criminal. These range from portraiture of 'celebrity' criminals such as Jack Sheppard in the eighteenth century, and Myra Hindley in the later twentieth century; to images found in the print media, such as criminal broadsheets and newspaper accounts of crime; to the formal mugshots which would become part of the police (and later prison) identification systems from the mid-nineteenth century. This paper will trace the history of these various forms, the functions they served, but also consider what the images meant to contemporary audiences, to police and prosecutors, to psychologists and social scientists, and other investigators of crime.

See above for Prof Shore's professional bio