



## Conference programme

**Britain's Child Migrants: interpreting the past and remembering today**

**Saturday 11 June**

**10.00 - 16.00**

In 2010, the Australian National Maritime Museum opened its exhibition, *On Their Own: Britain's Child Migrants*, which has since toured extensively in Australia and Britain, and reached several hundreds of thousands of visitors. The culmination of its tour at the V&A Museum of Childhood provides an important opportunity to reflect on the processes of remembering Britain's child migrants both through recent museum exhibitions and academic research. As the legacy of the child migration schemes continues to be examined through public inquiries in Britain and Australia, it is clear that this remains an unresolved history with effects still being lived out in the lives of the children and families who experienced these schemes.



**£45 (£40 concessions) / Adults**

**9am Pre-opening exhibition tour** with Esther Lutman (Maximum 30 places people book in advance when buying their conference ticket by e-mailing [mocbookings@vam.ac.uk](mailto:mocbookings@vam.ac.uk))

**Conference Chair: Esther Lutman, Curator V&A Museum of Childhood**

10.00 – 10.30am Registration and tea/coffee

**Morning sessions:**

**10.40 Key note: Kim Tao, Curator, Australian National Maritime Museum and Co-curator of the exhibition**

***'On their own: on the road in Australia and the UK'***

In June 2016 the Australian National Maritime Museum's travelling exhibition, *On their own – Britain's child migrants*, will complete an extensive six-year tour that has visited Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Fremantle, Canberra, Albury, Hobart (Australia), and Liverpool and London (UK). The tour provided a unique opportunity to explore hidden histories of child migration in a transnational context, while also revealing fascinating connections between material culture, memory and lived experience in a global framework. This paper examines how the exhibition has helped to forge relationships between former child migrants and long-lost friends and family members, as well as between international institutions. It also reflects on the challenges of presenting contested histories in museums, the power of personal stories to engage audiences and the complex historiography of Britain's child migrants.

**11.30 Gordon Lynch, Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology, University of Kent**

**'The moral meanings of child migration: the shadow-side of humanitarian piety'**

Whilst intended, in part, as a practical solution to the failures of the Poor Law in providing care for children of vulnerable families, the British child migration schemes also operated as moral projects, intended to remove children from the perceived moral pollution of unsuitable social environments to places of moral, civic and spiritual redemption. This paper will explore the moral cultures of these child migration schemes, considering the ways in which they operated on the basis of forms of humanitarian piety. Recognising the harm experienced by many child migrants, the paper goes on to examine the ways in which these moral cultures helped to create the social condition in which such harm became possible. It concludes by noting how humanitarian moral concerns continue to shape public memories of child migration schemes today.

**12.15 – 12.45 Professor Stephen Constantine, Lancaster University**

**'From zeroes to heroes: representations of British child migrants from the 1860s to the present'**

Although British child migrants varied considerably by origin, age and experience, they have usually been depicted publicly in very general terms. Child migration societies described them as deprived victims of urban environments and/or of family

circumstances, from which they needed to be rescued. Then, in Canada, to where most British child migrants were sent, the 'deprived' came to be depicted as the 'depraved', contaminating Canadian 'stock'. When, after a century, programmes of child migration came under critical scrutiny, former child migrants were again seen as victims, not of their origins but of the actions of misguided 'do-gooders'. But the narrative expressed more recently, especially with reference to child migration to Canada, stresses the positive contribution former British child migrants made to Canada (and the Empire) and how they deserve and are getting recognition. Such changes tell us more about the sensitivities of contemporary societies than about the lives of child migrants.

12.45 – 13.30 Lunch break
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#### **Afternoon sessions:**

**13.30 Eithne Nightingale researcher and former Head of Equality and Diversity at the V&A**

#### **'Migration, memories and memorabilia within museums'**

This talk will explore how issues of migration, including child migration, have been represented across the world in museums, galleries and other public spaces. How have they used objects, personal stories, contemporary art, new technology and interactivity within galleries and exhibitions? Do outreach and education programmes provide the opportunity for more in depth work? How have museums defined who is and who is not a migrant and how have migrants be involved, if at all, with such initiatives? Finally how can we measure the impact in terms of intercultural understanding, social cohesion and social justice?

**14.00 Jinny Rawlings: Artist**

#### **'Mariners and migrants, in search of "home"'**

Jini Rawlings will speak about two installations which were produced in 2006 after a year-long Artist's residency at the National Maritime Museum using video projections, text-etched and slumped glass and reflections in water to explore stories of exile and loss of the 19<sup>th</sup> century child migrants, 'Home Children' sent to Canada and boy

mariners sailing the same routes. They were developed through extensive research into archives and artifacts held by the Museum and other archives in the UK and Canada and use video shot during a voyage on a container ship from Liverpool to Canada and key locations in the Eastern Provinces and Newfoundland. The contemporary journey reflected the sense of in-betweenness experienced during the earlier migrant voyages.

14.30 – 15.00 (20mins talk + 10mins Q&A) **Rosemary Harris: Writer and performer**

**‘Tough tales for young audiences’**

Writer, performer and producer Rosemary Harris will discuss the development and delivery of her show based on the British Child Migrants, *One Way Ticket*, a spoken word theatre work for audiences aged 8+, written and performed with Justin Coe and Sophie Rose. Rosemary will discuss the work's development as part of her *Suitcase Trilogy* of shows which explore issues of migration for children, including: the selection of the British Child Migrants as a theme for a wider audience; the challenge of bringing painful contemporary social history to the stage; the decision-making processes required to safeguard young audiences; and the value of heightened language structures (such as performance poetry) in framing sensitive real-life material.

15.00 – 15.20 Tea break
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**15.20 Musicians Chris While, Julie Matthews and Producer John Leonard**

**‘The Ballads of Child Migration: Songs for Britain’s Child Migrants’**

Chris While, Julie Matthews and John Leonard will talk about the process of developing the album of folk music ‘The Ballads of Child Migration: Songs for Britain’s Child Migrants’. This moving album has tracks from a number of important musicians from the British Folk Scene and each track has been derived from a specific part of the history. These songs can be heard in the exhibition and act as a mark of remembrance for child migrants and their families. This sessions will include a performance by Chris While and Julie Matthews of some of the songs.

**15.50 – 16.00 Conference round-up Gordon Lynch**

**16.00 Tour of the Exhibition with Esther Lutman & Gordon Lynch**

**(Maximum 30 places people sign up on the day)**

