

Jill Thomas Austin

Curator



Experience:

Chicago History Museum (Curator, 2005 present); **Detroit Historical Museum** (Curator, 2001-05); Exhibitions International (Exhibitions and Publications Coordinator, 1998-2000); **Carnegie Museum of Art** (Program Specialist, 1995-97)

Education:

M.A., History of Art and Architecture, University of Pittsburgh, 1996, Concentration in Asian Art, Thesis: "British Collectors and the 1935 International Exhibition of Chinese Art"

Jill Austin joined the Chicago History Museum as a curator and public historian in winter (yes, winter) of 2005. Her first project was to develop the award-winning *Catholic Chicago*, a large scale exhibition and oral history project -- the first in a series exploring the role of religious communities in Chicago's history. The Museum then named Austin co-curator of *Out in Chicago* with Professor Jennifer Brier. It's Chicago's first major exploration of LGBT and queer urban history within the walls of a public, non-LGBT specific historical institution. *Out in Chicago* is the culmination of their three-year partnership that opened in May 2011 (through March 2012). Austin and Brier also co-edited an accompanying book of essays titled *Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads*. Between these ambitious works, Austin created an intimate map-based experience in the small community gallery titled *Lincoln Park: Block By Block*, an ode to the rich history of the Museum's own neighborhood.

Austin received a Master of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh where she also taught at the Carnegie Museum of Art. The decorative arts and design firm Exhibitions International, NY, was her entrée into the museum world of numerous curatorial, exhibitions and publication projects done in collaboration with museums across North America. At EI, Austin produced *Design for Living, The Artful Teapot* and coordinated annual exhibitions at the Park Avenue Armory. A Michigan native, Austin was curator of social history at the Detroit Historical Museum, where she exhibited *The Polish Presence in Detroit* and *American Icons: Detroit Designs*, prior to venturing to the other side of the Great Lakes. She is currently researching a potential project on the history of local Muslim communities and thinking about ways to learn Chicago history through math and science.