
Welcome to the International Training Programme (ITP) Newsletter for 2025

For our newsletter 2025, the ITP team and our Senior Fellow 2024, Yanoa Pomalima Carrasco, Museums and Heritage Consultant (Peru, ITP 2022), asked our global network to focus on the important issue of accessibility and inclusion in their museums.

Cultural institutions aim to be welcoming environments where communities feel represented, heard and valued. Museums and galleries around the world are exploring new ways to implement programmes, activities and guidelines to promote social justice, address exclusion and develop accessibility resources.

Many institutions are co-creating exhibitions to raise awareness about social-driven issues, including new voices in their narrative-building process, removing architectural barriers, creating tactile resources, designing audio descriptions, and experimenting with new technologies to enrich the visiting experience based on their visitor's needs.

In two sections – *Accessibility and inclusion* and *Global perspectives* – we asked our fellows to tell us more about their past experiences, current projects in their institutions or sectors or areas of professional research. We asked the questions - how are our institutions committed to diversity, inclusion and accessibility? How are we integrating accessibility and inclusion into our daily professional practices to benefit visitors and the staff? Is your organisation doing anything differently to address this need and bring about change? Who do you collaborate with to achieve that goal?

Institutions across our ITP global network are undergoing a variety of transformations; past interpretations are being re-narrated in the present context and, looking to the future through every means possible, they aim to engage with their audiences. Stories from around the UK and across the world share current practice to bring change and to reinvent and reimagine museum spaces for the audiences of the 21st century.



In *Your collection in focus*; *Did you know that?* and *Spotlight on*, fellows share stories from their museums on how their collections can be used as a catalyst for engaging with audiences in a new and creative way. They tell us how objects can be a provocation for connecting historical objects with local communities to tell new narratives. They share something with readers that they may not already know about their museum or the cultural sector in their country – stories which share something new or unique to an institution, country or region or they give us an in-depth view of their museums, galleries or institutions or a project or programme.

Finally, our *Bulletin board* and *Global network* news sections tell us more about what is happening in institutions around the world and detail our alumni's personal and professional updates.

As always, the ITP Newsletter takes you on a global journey through different institutions, collections, staff and audiences. It focuses on how culture and heritage can provide a platform for new thinking, inviting challenging conversations and addressing current issues – both local and global. It tells our fellows' stories, and it's guided by the projects and programmes being delivered by our global network.

I hope you enjoy learning more about our network's responses to the theme of accessibility and inclusion in museum sectors around the world.

Claire Messenger
International Training Programme Manager
British Museum

Accessibility and Inclusion

Pukllawasi, accessible exhibition at Huaca Pucllana Archaeological Site & Museum



Sala Pukllawasi is an initiative that introduces a new interpretive approach to Huaca Pucllana, offering an interactive and tactile experience that allows visitors to connect directly with the site's history. Through hands-on activities and a curated selection of ceramics, textiles, and wooden and bone replicas – crafted by local artisans – we developed thematic modules that enhance sensory engagement. These modules enable visitors to explore the landscape and natural resources of the Lima region, learn about agricultural and fishing practices, and discover the instruments, crafts, construction techniques, and rituals of the Lima and Ychsma cultures, reaching back over 1,600 and 1,200 years. To ensure that accessibility was integrated into the outcomes and throughout the design process, we collaborated with the local borough office for disability services to engage with members of the community who have visual, auditory, and mobility impairments. Their active participation was essential in shaping an inclusive gallery for and with these communities.

The gallery aims for intuitive navigation and ease of use. It meets varied needs with Braille and large-print booklets, audio description guides, sign language interpreters, and wheelchair-accessible furniture and facilities. These attributes promote independent exploration and interaction for every visitor and their companions while they engage with our local heritage. Furthermore, the local borough council has enhanced site accessibility by installing accessible restrooms and adding tactile paving within the gallery and at the main entrance of the archaeological site.

Museums worldwide are increasingly recognising the importance of focusing on disability and accessibility to create inclusive and welcoming spaces for diverse visitors. The 2023 International Museum Day highlighted their role in community well-being, sustainable development, and fostering connections. In Lima, we emphasised the need for accessible programs at museums and archaeological sites. While some offer Braille and Peruvian Sign Language, comprehensive strategies engaging underrepresented communities, including those with visual, auditory, and mobility impairments, remain rare. True accessibility requires holistic, inclusive approaches to create enriching experiences for all.

Huaca Pucllana, a key archaeological site in Lima, features three primary attractions; the pre-Hispanic pyramid, a museum, and a gallery for blind visitors. Established over ten years ago, this gallery was initially created for the visually impaired community, especially school groups, to provide an overview of diverse Peruvian cultures. The museum team realised the importance of updating the narrative to enhance its connection to Huaca Pucllana's local history and heritage while developing new resources to improve accessibility and reach a broader audience. In response, we collaborated with Pucllana to transform its accessible gallery into a welcoming, interactive space that connects the site and its collections with children, youth, and adults. This initiative aims to build meaningful connections with local heritage and inspire positive changes in public engagement. The redesign includes multi-sensory experiences following universal accessibility principles.

To enhance the visitor experience, Pucllana's team developed the *Adobitos Workshop*, an interactive activity about the construction techniques used to build the site's walls and platforms. Visitors engage in the traditional process of adobe-making by mixing mud with shell fragments, dust, and botanical materials.

We are committed to further improving accessibility at Huaca Pucllana. Our plans include adding more tactile resources to the exhibition, developing SEN backpacks for visitors with autism and learning disabilities, and collaborating with the local borough council to inspire other archaeological sites and museums to adopt similar accessibility initiatives.

Yanoa Pomalima Carrasco
Curator and museum consultant, Museideas
Perú, ITP Fellow 2022, Senior Fellow 2024.



Tactile models
at the Museo
Tifológico of
Madrid.

Tactile image
from the
British Museum's
collection.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Beyond Sight: Discovery Museums Through Touch

In August 2023, the ICOM National Committee of Armenian Museums launched *Beyond Sight: Discovering Museums Through Touch*. This project was funded through an Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) grant, extended by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State to support the social inclusion of people with disabilities through art and culture.

Beyond Sight: Discovering Museums Through Touch is the first project since the establishment of ICOM Armenia that the organisation is implementing and leading on a long-term basis. Despite having over 10 years of experience in working with museums across Armenia, ICOM has never done project activities in one specific region and for one specific target group. Recognising the importance of cultural activities for diverse community groups, the organisation has decided to implement a project for people with visual impairments targeting two museums in Gyumri, Shirak Region.

This is ICOM Armenia's first project targeting the community of visually impaired and blind.

As part of the project, the needs of the museums of Gyumri were assessed and analysed. Following this, *Beyond Sight: Discovering Museums Through Touch* capacity-building training was organised in cooperation with professional organisations and individual experts. The aim was to enhance the museum specialists' skills and knowledge on inclusion, accessibility, and human rights in museums, ensuring professional behaviour when working with people with disabilities.

A key element of the project was a set of tactile replicas created by ICOM Armenia in cooperation with the Department of Sculpture (ArtLab) of the Armenian State Academy of Fine Arts Gyumri branch, the Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters' Gallery, and the Museum of Traditional Architecture and Urban Life. As a result, the accessible exhibition has become a unique and inclusive platform not only for people with visual impairments but for all visitors. The inclusive exhibition in the Museum of Traditional Architecture and Urban Life of Gyumri showcases traditional arts and crafts of Gyumri through 12 unique objects including working tools, jewellery, masonry, and blacksmith production. While walking through the gallery of traditional crafts, visually impaired and blind visitors can touch and read about the artefacts through explanations in braille. In the Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters' Gallery, seven works were used as a base for producing tactile replicas. These replicas showcased famous masterpieces by the authors highlighting different themes and techniques.



These accessible exhibitions are unique in that, apart from presenting the time, place, or creator of showcased artefacts, they give visitors the opportunity to discover the traditions of Gyumri craftsmanship and the artistic heritage of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan through touch as well as educational programmes that ensure a comprehensive visitor experience. The educational programmes titled *Let's Discover* are ensuring that visually impaired and blind visitors can explore through touch and read short explanations about the objects as well as participating in an informal learning program. *Let's Discover* educational programmes are intended for mixed age and gender groups thus ensuring the equal rights and accessibility of the exhibitions for all.

The Beyond Sight: Discovering Museums Through Touch project proved to be a very important contribution to cultural life in Armenia, opening opportunities for people with disabilities to engage with arts and culture. The concept of equality, diversity and inclusion helps to promote active participation of vulnerable groups and individuals in social and cultural activities. The success of this project encouraged our team to continue this project in different museums and regions of Armenia. In partnership with local and international partners, ICOM Armenia would like to pioneer the idea of universal design and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across Armenian museums to support the inclusion of people with disabilities through art and culture.

The project was implemented from August 2023 to July 2024 by the ICOM National Committee of Armenian Museums with the funds of an Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) grant extended by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State.

The Project Team Included:

- Hayk Mkrtchyan (IVLP 2019, ITP Senior Fellow 2017)
- Marine Mkrtchyan (IVLP 2017, ITP 2014)
- Ovsanna Harutyunyan (IVLP 2022)
- Marine Haroyan (ICOM Armenia)
- Vahagn Ghukasyan (Armenian Academy of Fine Arts, Gyumri Branch)

Hayk Mkrtchyan
Head of International Partnerships, Cultural Development
Foundation of Armenia
Armenia, ITP Fellow 2014, Senior Fellow 2017

*Beyond Sight:
Discovering
Museums Through
Touch project*

Kabarnet Museum Outreach Programme for special needs children in Baringo County



The Kabarnet Museum is committed to fostering inclusive access to educational and cultural resources to promote lifelong learning and community engagement. This programme was born out of the invaluable insights and skills gained through the UK International Training Programme (ITP 2024), particularly the sessions delivered by the Learning and National Partnerships Department. In alignment with our work plan, the education team, headed by the curator and with the support of stakeholders, conducted an outreach programme from 5 – 16 October targeting 14 special schools in Baringo County.

The programme underscored the Museum's dedication to making its educational offerings accessible to all, especially learners with special needs, who often face barriers to cultural and scientific enrichment. By tailoring educational content on topics such as evolution, material culture, reptiles, and birds to the needs of these students, the programme provided a platform for interactive learning and awareness creation.

The education programme for learners with hearing, visual, physical and intellectual impairments was designed

to be multi-sensory, ensuring every participant had an enriching experience.

For learners with hearing impairments, we used visual aids, including diagrams and sign language, assisted by teachers, and tactile experiences, such as handling artefacts and models, to promote engagement.

For those with visual impairments, the programme focused on audio input through detailed verbal descriptions and storytelling, supplemented by hands-on exploration of objects; the teachers helped with the Braille materials and embossed graphics. Engaging students through hands-on activities and active participation in learning was encouraged through physical interaction with artefacts and guided activities.

For learners with physical impairments, we emphasised visual and auditory learning, using engaging visuals, videos, and verbal explanations. We also ensured accessibility through adjusted seating and display arrangements. Emotional support was also central to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

We adopted a multi-sensory approach for learners with intellectual impairments, combining simple visuals, hands-on activities, movement-based learning, and emotional connections through storytelling and relatable examples to sustain attention and enhance understanding.

By integrating these sensory-focused strategies, we created an inclusive learning environment that empowered all learners to engage with and appreciate their shared cultural and natural heritage. This outreach programme represented a critical step toward inclusivity and ensuring that learners of all abilities can access, appreciate, and engage with their shared cultural and natural heritage.

In addition to the educational aspects, the programme highlighted the museum's free entry policy for people with disabilities, fostering enthusiasm for future visits. Complementing these efforts were practical support measures, including donations of sanitary towels, dignity packs, and refreshments, thanks to the generous contributions of stakeholders to whom we were highly appreciative for their kind support.

The programme was conducted in 14 special schools in Baringo County, reaching a total population of 650 students. Ochii Special School (hearing impaired), Marigat Special School (visually impaired), Marigat Secondary Integrated School (mixed), Kambi Samaki School for the Disabled, Esagari Special School (hearing impaired), Emining Special School (visually impaired), Kabartonjo Special School (visually impaired), St Patrick Special School (physically impaired), Kabarnet Deaf and Blind (mixed), Childcare for the Physically Disabled,

Nakurtakwei Integrated School, Kiserian Integrated School, and Pemwai School for the Mentally Impaired. The education outreach programme faced several challenges that hindered its effectiveness but ensured essential learning for us. One major issue was insufficient funding, which limited the full implementation of planned activities. Additionally, communication barriers, especially with hearing-impaired learners, and limited interaction with visually impaired students further restricted accessibility. The timing of the programme, as it coincided with end-term and national exam preparations in special schools, reduced participation. Moreover, curriculum differences made adapting the programme for specific institutions difficult. Lastly, challenging terrain complicated access to some schools, particularly given the constraints of the available vehicles.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this programme, including the ITP team for imparting the invaluable knowledge and skills that served as the foundation for the development of this work.

We deeply value the contributions from all our donors, both institutions and individuals, whose unwavering support made this initiative possible and I would like to acknowledge and commend the dedication and hard work of the Kabarnet Museum team, particularly the Education Department, for their tireless efforts in ensuring the programme's success.

Lillian Amwanda Ochieng
Curator, Kabarnet Museum
Kenya, ITP Fellow 2024



Accessibility and Inclusion
Access programmes at Ayala Museum

At the 2023 Museums Association Conference in Gateshead, one of the major issues discussed was the pressing need to address societal discrimination through diverse representations of disability, accountability, equitable engagement, and empathy. A strong call to action against 'ableism', defined as the 'discrimination of and prejudice against disabled people based on the belief that typical abilities are superior', was a key focus of the discussions. The urgent need to improve the experiences of disabled people in museums was highlighted. The aspiration is for museums to become emotive and respectful spaces. Chi Onwurah, Member of Parliament for Newcastle upon Tyne Central and former Shadow Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation, who served as the keynote speaker at the conference, emphasised that 'museums should raise the profile of underrepresented communities'. This campaign aligns closely with Ayala Museum's incremental implementation of access programmes earlier that year, aimed at creating a more welcoming space and offering inclusive experiences for persons with disabilities.

In celebration of the 2023 International Museum Day, which focused on the theme *Museums, Sustainability, and Well-being*, Ayala Museum launched the *Collections Corner: Touch the Object Program*. This initiative introduced a refreshed approach to connect audiences with objects from the museum's collection through direct interaction. While the artworks and objects displayed in exhibitions are not meant to be touched, this programme allows guests to smell, touch, feel, and even take photos or selfies with the featured objects. These include actual artefacts from the museum's collection, such as the *Ilo-ilo* (betel nut container) and food moulds, as well as new ethnographic items represented in the museum's care, like the T'boli *k'gal* (blouse), Gaddang *tapet* (men's cape), and *kattukong* (gourd hat). The programme was inspired by the Hands-on Desk at the British Museum, which I experienced as a fellow during the 2019 International Training Programme.

Another access programme launched that year was the *Braille Project for The Diorama Experience of Philippine History*, coinciding with the celebration of Museums and Galleries Month in the Philippines. First unveiled in 1974, when Ayala Museum opened to the public, *The Diorama Experience* consists of 60 intricately detailed miniature tableaux depicting Philippine history. These dioramas were painstakingly hand-carved by master woodcarvers from Paete, Laguna, a town renowned for its exceptional hand-carving tradition. Each tableau features painted figurines, backdrops, building facades, houses or room interiors, and props such as pottery, furniture, and weapons, all based on meticulous historical research.

The Braille Project introduced handheld booklets with braille translations of brief descriptions for all 60 dioramas, enabling visually impaired guests to explore Philippine history as represented in these tableaux. The booklets also include English translations, allowing companions of visually impaired guests to experience each diorama together.



Towards the end of 2023 and into 2024, scaled hand-carved reproductions of ten key elements from ten selected dioramas were installed as part of the *Collections Corner: Touch the Object* initiative. Crafted from local baticuling wood, master woodcarver Angelito Baldemor from Paete created objects such as the Manila Galleon, kurab (body armour worn over the torso like a vest), United States General Douglas MacArthur's pipe and cap, and the Manunggul Jar (a secondary burial jar associated with journey to the afterlife).

These tactile reproductions were designed for visually impaired guests to explore through touch and were accompanied by braille translations of English texts explaining the significance of each object. In addition to serving as accessible features for visually impaired visitors, these reproductions also function as interactive modules for children and adults of all ages.

This programme was inspired by tactile resources I encountered at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, and historical sites managed by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines.

For these projects, I worked closely with my colleagues Kenneth Esguerra (Senior Curator and Head of Conservation), Arnold Torrecampo (Collections Associate Manager), Jo Ann Gando (Graphics Designer), Henrielle Omolida (Collections Senior Associate), Francesca Locsin (Exhibitions Associate), Rex Cabugon (Multimedia), with texts edited by Marinella Mina (Curator and Head of Publications and Research) and Marie Julienne Ente (Assistant Curator). For the braille translations, Ayala Museum partnered with Resources for the Blind.

In the years ahead, and subject to budget availability, our team plans to develop additional access programs for the rest of the permanent exhibitions at Ayala Museum. For now, we hope these initiatives will inspire persons with disabilities to visit and enjoy *The Diorama Experience of Philippine History* at Ayala Museum.

Aprille Tijam

Associate Director and Head of Exhibitions,
Ayala Museum
Philippines, ITP Fellow 2019

Braille booklets
available to
visitors at
Ayala Museum.

Accessibility and Inclusion
Echoes of Memory: Embracing Aging and Connection

The Museum and Archives of North Vancouver opens the year with *Echoes of Memory*, an exhibition that explores the personal significance of memory, aging and connection. Rather than focusing solely on the technical aspects of memory loss, the exhibition highlights how objects, experiences, and stories shape identity and belonging. It also challenges cultural perceptions of aging, encouraging a perspective that embraces rather than fears the process.

A key theme of *Echoes of Memory* is the importance of intergenerational learning, emphasizing the value of knowledge-sharing in fostering a more connected society. This exhibition continues the Museum's commitment to reframing its gallery space, initiating meaningful conversations, and addressing social issues through engagement with the local community. By doing so, the Museum promotes inclusivity and reflects the richness of North Vancouver's history and contemporary life.

A major focus of this exhibition is creating a dementia-friendly space where individuals living with memory loss, along with their families and caregivers, feel welcomed and supported. Raising awareness about dementia and fostering education help inspire communities to build environments of understanding and accessibility. According to the Public Health Department, in Canada, promoting dementia-friendly principles involves educating the public, supporting those living with dementia in maintaining independence and amplifying their voices and experiences.

Following advice from the American Alliance of Museums, museums can identify and address access barriers (e.g., physical, transportation and digital) by taking some measures:

- Ensure comfort through seating, acoustics, lighting and clear signage.
- Combat cultural and social barriers (e.g., ageism in staff behaviour and programming).
- Provide age-friendly digital design and equitable opportunities for employment/volunteering.
- Empower older adults as "culture-bearers" to share their knowledge and stories.
- Use art to support people with dementia and similar conditions in maintaining mobility and social connections.
- Promote intergenerational programs to reduce ageism and foster relationships.
- Keep memories alive through objects that strengthen family connections.

Objects play a powerful role in preserving memory and identity. An object gains significance when it carries a story, evoking emotions and nostalgia that connect us to home, loved ones, and key life moments. Museums, archives and individuals collect these objects to maintain historical and cultural ties, allowing us to reflect on our personal and collective pasts. As we navigate an era overflowing with digital and physical narratives, it is crucial to capture these memories in meaningful ways. The objects that anchor these stories will help future generations make sense of the homes, relationships and experiences that shaped the past.



With no cure in sight, the best way to combat the effects of dementia is by looking inward at individual well-being and outward at community support. Social connection can slow cognitive decline and reduce feelings of loneliness and loss. This is particularly crucial for underrepresented communities, where disparities in well-being can increase the risk of dementia. By fostering inclusivity, safety and socialization, communities can create protective environments that promote long-term health.

Moreover, shifting our cultural perspective on aging can lead to a more positive and meaningful understanding of the later stages of life. Rather than viewing aging as a decline, we can recognize it as a continuation—an opportunity for individuals to remain active and influential members of society. Elders are not just the keepers of wisdom; they are leaders and storytellers who enrich our collective experience. By embracing this shift, we can create a future where aging is valued, and every life stage is honoured for its contributions.

Andrea Terrón Gomez

Curator
MONOVA: Museum & Archives of North Vancouver
Guatemala, ITP 2017 & Senior Fellow 2018

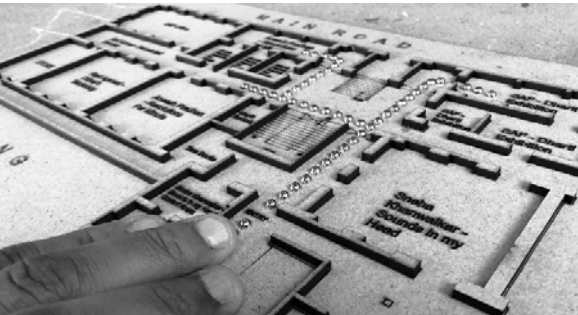
Echoes of
Memory at
MONOVA

Accessibility and inclusion

Making Museums a Sensory-Safe and Inclusive Experience for Audiences with Invisible Disabilities

Museums are spaces of learning, wonder, and cultural enrichment. However, for visitors with invisible disabilities such as autism, ADHD, and sensory processing disorders, these environments can be overwhelming due to bright lights, loud noises, and unexpected crowds. To ensure inclusivity, museums must adopt sensory-friendly practices that create a comfortable and accessible experience for all visitors.

Access For ALL, a leading organization in accessibility and inclusion, has been working to make museums in India more welcoming for audiences with physical challenges and neurodiverse needs. Their initiatives at institutions like Supreme Court Museum, Coldplay concerts – India Tour, India Art Fair, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), National Museum Delhi, and Bihar Museum have introduced tactile pathways, quiet zones, and sensory maps to help visitors navigate the space with ease. Additionally, Access For ALL has developed sensory-friendly museum guides and conducted staff training to ensure a more inclusive approach to visitor engagement.



By prioritising sensory accessibility, museums can foster an environment where individuals with invisible disabilities feel welcomed rather than excluded. I am happy to share five key strategies that we have integrated in our practices to create a sensory-safe museum experience:

1. Designated Quiet Zones – Provide dedicated areas where visitors can take a break from sensory stimuli.
2. Tactile Artworks and Sensory Maps – Offer tactile art tours, provide maps and guides that indicate areas with bright lights, noise, and potential triggers to help visitors plan their experience. (as shown in images)
3. Adaptive Lighting and Sound – Use dimmable lights and volume control options in certain exhibits to reduce sensory overload.
4. Sensory Toolkits – Provide noise-cancelling headphones, fidget tools, and weighted lap pads for visitors upon request.
5. Staff Training – Training museum personnel on neurodiversity awareness to better assist visitors with sensory sensitivities.

By implementing these changes, museums can become truly inclusive spaces, ensuring that all visitors—regardless of their sensory needs—can engage with history, art, and culture in a meaningful way.

Siddhant Shah
Museum Access Consultant, Access For ALL
India, ITP Fellow 2022



Tactile Maps with
Sensory triggers.

Tactile Artwork
at Serendipity
Arts Festival.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Accessibility and Inclusion in Northern Ireland Museums



While most museums have made significant strides in improving physical access, calls for decolonisation have prompted National Museums NI to examine barriers beyond the physical and aim to increase access to 4500 world cultures artefacts collected during the peak of British imperialism. Most of which have remained in storage, largely inaccessible and with their stories not visible in displays and exhibitions.

Decolonisation as a term, can easily be misconstrued if not defined in recognisable, measurable, and achievable actions. *Inclusive Global Histories* (IGH) is National Museums NI's ongoing long-term approach that centres and engages relevant ethnic groups locally and internationally to understand and present these collections better. It encompasses addressing the legacies of colonialism through respectful interpretation and diverse perspectives, whilst ensuring that contributions of different communities are represented and valued.

Global Voice Local Choices (GVLC) was a pilot community engagement project with six museums across Northern Ireland opening their spaces and collections to marginalised communities. Communities engaged with collections and expertly provided perspectives and shared knowledge that was unfamiliar to curators. Most importantly it availed them a fair opportunity to add their voice to shared histories. Six co-curated displays featuring new stories, loans and donations ensured visibility and reportedly a sense of being heard. The Decolonising Museums in Northern Ireland Guidance Document is a useful resource informed by the learnings from the project. It will be a great starting point for any organisation in any sector thinking about accessibility, inclusion, and diversity. It was compiled by participating museums and the project partners, National Museums NI, African Caribbean Support Organisation NI and NI Museums Council. Representatives of the above-mentioned organisations and museums continue to meet quarterly to explore possible opportunities, report decolonisation activity and share best practice to sustain the momentum achieved during the project.

Northern Ireland's museums have embraced accessibility and inclusion through an authentic openness to collaborate with ethnic minority communities, researchers, and authors, valuing their expertise and perspectives. Together, these steps reflect a commitment towards creating more inclusive and representative spaces.

Agrippa Njanina
Assistant Curator: Inclusive Global Histories
National Museums Northern Ireland



Participants
from Starling
collective outside
IGH gallery,
Ulster Museum
on launch of their
co- curated display.

Orphan visits to the museum: a step towards accessibility and inclusion



In Iraq, the ongoing wars and conflicts have left deep social and humanitarian impacts, including a significant increase in the number of orphans living in harsh conditions. The loss of family means not only deprivation of material care but also emotional support and a sense of belonging. Therefore, it is essential to find ways to reintegrate these children into society through educational and recreational environments that help them build their identities and enhance their self-confidence. Museums, especially the Iraq Museum, play a pivotal role in this area by connecting orphans with their cultural heritage and offering them a rich experience that opens new horizons. The Iraq Museum is more than just a space for displaying artefacts; it is an educational space that allows visitors, especially children, to explore their history and engage with cultural heritage in innovative ways, contributing to the formation of their cultural identity and fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

To enhance the integration of orphans and ensure they benefit from this experience, several programmes have been implemented, including interactive workshops that allow children to directly engage with artefacts, such as recreating ancient statues or experiencing ancient engraving and drawing techniques. Additionally, storytelling sessions about historical figures can make history more vivid and engaging. Educational games based on solving puzzles and challenges inspired by ancient inscriptions and symbols can stimulate critical thinking in children. The distribution of colouring books containing drawings inspired by Iraqi artefacts would also foster their connection to heritage as they colour them in their own style.

Furthermore, organising an annual *Orphan Heritage Day* with special tours, performances, and workshops can allow children to experience daily life in ancient civilisations. To ensure the sustainability of these activities, long-term partnerships can be established between the Iraq Museum and orphanages, setting up regular visits tailored to the children's needs. Moreover, training programmes for orphanage supervisors on how to use the museum as an educational and developmental tool can be developed. Collaboration with educational institutions and specialists in educational psychology can help design activities that meet the psychological needs of orphaned children, contributing to improving their emotional and social well-being.

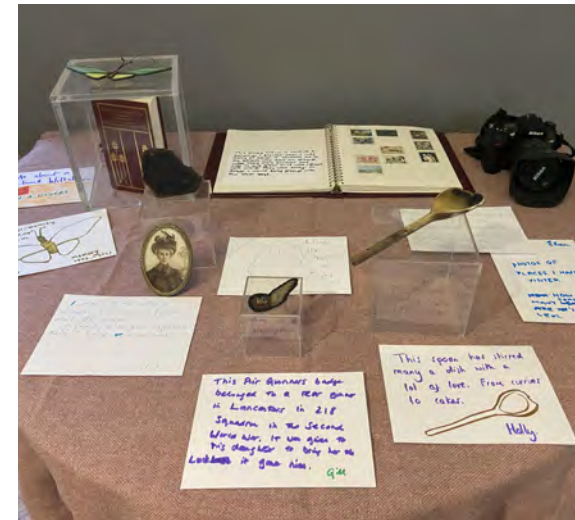
Promoting accessibility to museums for various groups, especially orphans, is not just a charitable initiative, but an investment in building a new generation that understands the value of their cultural heritage and feels connected to it. Through these efforts, the Iraq Museum can become a model for transforming cultural institutions into inclusive spaces that enhance social integration and provide equal opportunities for learning and discovery. Museums are no longer just places to preserve history but platforms for dialogue, connection, and future building. This can only be achieved by emphasising values of inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility for all, including orphaned children who deserve a place in this rich cultural scene.

Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji

Fourth Archaeological Excavator, Department of Ancient
Writings, Iraq Museum
Iraq, ITP Fellow 2024

Special tours of
the Iraq Museum
for Orphan
Heritage Day.

Community Culture Club at the Museum of Norwich



Heritage sites, museums and arts venues can play important roles in local communities, providing safe and welcoming places for people to come together. Community Culture Club is a creative wellbeing programme based at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell. The programme is designed for older adults living with dementia, carers, people with long-term health conditions, and those who are lonely or socially isolated. The programme runs for ten sessions from November to February each year. Since its inception in 2021, we have run three cohorts of Community Culture Club, and we have now commenced working with our fourth group of participants.

Community Culture Club is currently supported by funding from UEA's NICHE Kintsugi research project, with a special focus on developing a creative embedded evaluation model. Last year we welcomed creative evaluation expert Holly Sandiford to the team to deliver this evaluation alongside our existing Community Culture Club staff. Each session Holly developed new creative evaluation tools that seamlessly fitted into session delivery, as well as finding an accessible way of using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

You care for me so well, you and your colleagues, nowhere else do I get this – Community Culture Club 2023-2024 participant

As part of the Community Culture Club programme, we invite guests from a range of sectors to participate in sessions. Last year we hosted professionals from Adult Social Services, Norwich Libraries, Mental Health Nursing, Citizens Advice, Alzheimer's UK, NUA, Hospital Rooms, Norfolk Hospice, and Norfolk Museums Service. Hosting guests allows us to share our practice, but also for our participants to meet professionals from relevant services in a safe space.

Community Culture Club creates a supportive environment where participants can develop meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging. By encouraging connections among participants, the project helps reduce loneliness and promote ongoing social engagement. This sense of community enhances emotional wellbeing and empowers individuals to express themselves, leading to lasting friendships that extend beyond the project. Engaging with the museum's staff, collections and the city's history further strengthens this community by helping participants connect with their surroundings and themselves, deepening their overall sense of belonging.

Rosalind Hewitt

Learning and Engagement Officer – Norwich Museums
Norfolk Museums Service

Feedback from participants following a session on textiles, woven together to form one patchwork.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Empowering women through craft: bridging social inclusion and heritage preservation



Museums do more than preserve history; they can be powerful agents of social change. My experience with the British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP) revealed how cultural institutions can economically empower women. At the Alexandria National Museum, we launched a programme that trains women in traditional crafts like embroidery, pottery, weaving, crochet, jewellery making, copperwork, woodwork, and natural leatherwork, transforming them into both guardians of cultural heritage and agents of social change.

This is more than technical training. Through workshops led by skilled volunteer artisans, these women not only learn traditional craft techniques but also build self-confidence, entrepreneurial skills, and create supportive networks. By collaborating with local craftsmen, they develop relationships that open doors to small business opportunities, turning heritage crafts into sustainable livelihoods. However, one critical element is missing, visibility for their products. Without a platform, their beautiful creations risk being overlooked. To address this, I propose integrating these crafts into the museum's ecosystem—creating a permanent gift shop or holding temporary exhibitions to showcase their work. Additionally, by partnering with local communities and launching online campaigns, we can connect artisans with global markets, expanding their reach.



The impact of this initiative is threefold. Economically, it offers women financial independence, breaking cycles of poverty and exclusion. Socially, their involvement in these crafts challenges gender norms, fostering inclusion in sectors traditionally dominated by men. Culturally, the revival of these crafts ensures the transmission of intangible heritage, preserving traditions for future generations.

The Alexandria Museum initiative demonstrates that heritage preservation can be dynamic, driving inclusive development. By focusing on both preservation and empowerment, museums can redefine their role in society. They become bridges between the past and future, ensuring that cultural heritage thrives and benefits everyone. Through such programmes, museums can empower communities and preserve cultural diversity.

Heba Hassan Ahmed Amer
Curator and Head of Education Section, Alexandria National Museum
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2024



Local women taking part in traditional craft workshops, including crocheting, embroidery and jewellery making.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Don't forget to touch!

On 15 October 2024, a temporary exhibition titled *The Role of Students in Late Soviet Armenia's Liberal Culture* opened at the Yerevan State University History Museum, named after Prof. L. Gharibjanyan. The exhibition aims to familiarise museum visitors, particularly students, with the cultural manifestations of liberalism during the late Soviet period, which influenced the worldview of young people and later played a significant role in the independence process.

Following approximately six months of research, the research team of the Yerevan State University History Museum collected archival documents and period-specific objects and developed the exhibition's concept. It was realised through display panels and artefacts gathered from museum and private collections. The display panels feature concise annotated texts alongside photographs that reflect and are characteristic of the given period.

The temporary exhibition also includes an interactive and evocative film series inspired by the urban lifestyle and the spirit of youth at that time. The films offer visitors a deeper understanding and an opportunity to experience the essence of the period. The exhibition features accessible, tactile spaces such as recreations of a 1960s café and living room corner, a display of hippie clothing, a bookshelf filled with banned and 'samizdat' books, a radio transmitter, as well as vintage vinyl records that were rare, inaccessible, or even forbidden during that era. The inclusion of printed periodicals, flyers, and a typewriter further enriches the exhibition's atmosphere, immersing visitors in the spirit of the showcased era and making the materials more tangible.

Additionally, the exhibition included five thematic lectures-discussions held at the museum, featuring prominent speakers who were known for their liberal views and approaches during that time. They shared captivating stories and insights about the distinctive aspects of the era with the audience.

The project-exhibition, *The Role of Students in Late Soviet Armenia's Liberal Culture*, was implemented at the Yerevan State University Museum with support from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and YSU. This marked the YSU History Museum's first grant-based collaborative initiative. Recognising the significance of grants in such international projects, the museum actively pursues similar collaborative efforts. The university's history museum has adopted the approach of studying and presenting the history of modern Armenia from the perspective of YSU, aiming to reinterpret and reassess historical events through a fresh lens.

Tatevik Saroyan
Director, Yerevan State University Museum
Armenia, ITP Fellow 2022



Visitors in the temporary exhibition, *The Role of Students in Late Soviet Armenia's Liberal Culture*

Global Perspectives
Accessibility and inclusion at the National Museum of Unity, Ibadan, Nigeria



Museums around the world are creating much friendlier, more accessible and inclusive spaces for its diverse target audiences. The National Museum of Unity, Ibadan is not left out in achieving these goals. Hence, in collaboration with our sponsors the National Museum of Unity, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria held its annual PWD (people with disabilities) program on the 13 November 2024.

It was tagged 'music, play and dance'. My team and I believe every member of our community must be able to experience the museum whether they are abled or disabled. For this reason, we have a responsibility to engage with people with various disabilities annually through the PWD program. The team offers open invitations to the various orphanages and special needs schools, and we facilitated their transportation to the museum. The attendance was massive, and it was a day out at the museum with a lot of excitement and merriment, with staff and friends of the museum in attendance.

It is an inclusive programme for people with disabilities to relate, play and dance in the museum space. They can often be depressed, cut off or neglected by society because of their disabilities. For this reason, the PWD team tailors this programme to protect their mental health, helping them realise how important they are. Hence, the doors of the museum were opened to them to gain access and relate to their community within the museum space freely without discrimination.

Africans have cultural values, history and idioms embedded within its music. This also includes Nigerians; through dancing we enjoy the lyrics of songs, celebrate the beauties embedded in our cultural heritage and showcase our rich culture to the world. These are our intangible collections. The world at large recognises music as 'food' for the soul. Music coupled with dancing is therapeutic. This underscores the Museum of Unity's

intention to reach people with disabilities through music, dancing and play. These major activities help people to relax, feel loved and get inspired within the museum space. This creates a mental balance for them. A blend of intangible and tangible collections was a topic of discussion at the just concluded 2024 Kigali ICMEMOHRI conference and it gladdens my heart that my museum is committed to blending intangible heritage with its collection. My attendance at this conference was sponsored by the BM International Training Programme.

Various talents were celebrated. One of which is the 'Iwa eda' group, this group consists of two paralysed persons that use wheelchairs. One of them is a writer that has published several books used in primary and secondary schools in Oyo state, Nigeria. The other is a shoe cobbler, and he offers vocational trainings to interested individuals.

We also hosted a visually impaired person, who is a poet. His skill in poetry is epic. He mesmerised the audience with poetry and gave a motivational talk to inspire and encourage others living with disabilities. It was an opportunity for the abled to learn from the disabled, they showed capabilities irrespective of physical abilities. Both the abled and disabled took to the dance floor. It was an opportunity to discourage ableism. We had a free market, where donated clothing and new shoes (donated by staff and sponsors) were free for everyone who attended. The excitement at the occasion was obvious.

Access and inclusion were at the heart of the conference, dissuading museums from ableism. The Unity Museum has taken steps in achieving some of the strategies discussed at the conference, though we still have a long way to go. At this event, some lessons learnt at the 2023 ITP/Museums Association conference, Gateshead were put to use.

Prior to the event, I educated the PWD team on physical description and its importance to the visually impaired. Hence, the anchor of the event gave a physical description of himself at every given opportunity for the sake of the visually impaired audience as well as sign language for any deaf attendees.

Recently, the Museum of Unity collaborated with IFRA (French Institute for Research in Africa), to facilitate the construction of a ramp at the entrance leading to the galleries. It created easy access for anyone with additional physical needs to get into our galleries with ease.

We soon hope to introduce induction loops, braille, audio visuals and museum wheelchairs to make visits into our galleries easier, interesting and more inclusive for everyone.

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade
Assistant Chief Conservator, National Museum of Unity
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2022



Resistance in higher education: advocating for diversity in Museum Studies programmes



If you have spent any time following recent American politics, you might be familiar with the current state of confusion, anger, and fear that most arts and culture organisations, from national to local, are experiencing. The targeted attacks defunding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have far-reaching potential impacts on museums and higher education institutions in the United States.

At the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), a United States Congressionally chartered tribal college, our museum studies programme was founded on Indigenous ways of knowing and a recognition of the impacts of colonialism on the evolution of museum work. We teach our students the value of collaborative curation, repatriation, and culturally sensitive approaches to collections care. Our students also gain the confidence to critically question potentially harmful institutionalised practices that have stemmed directly from the historical treatment of Native Americans and our material culture. Our students graduate and go into the museum field as advocates for diversity of thought and practice. This foundational ideology, respected and reflected in museums with Native collections, is more important than ever to protect and support as it is potentially more threatened than any time in recent history.

It is vital, especially in the United States, that museum studies programmes continue to mentor and educate emerging museum professionals to recognise the necessity of standards of practice that embrace diversity and inclusion and that reject racism, inequality, and ableism. The professionals, communities, and students that make up the museum field in America have the

potential to be a force for resistance. By using collections, exhibitions, education, and programming to subvert politically driven narratives aimed at causing confusion and sowing misinformation, we can ensure museums continue to provide a platform for truthful discourse. IAIA's pedagogy, students, and faculty are, by default, directly resisting federal initiatives to quell arts and culture organisations and actively celebrating the incredible diversity of thought that makes arts and culture organisations threatening to the current administration.

We would be leaving our communities adrift in the face of overwhelming political upheaval without museum studies programmes, especially those grounded in Indigenous approaches to museum work, to train the next generation of professionals to uphold principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Moving forward, education will be one of the strongest tools at the hands of the museum field. Museums are bastions of public education, and education makes a community resilient.

Mattie Reynolds (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma)
Department Chair and Assistant Professor of Museum Studies, Institute of American Indian Arts
USA, ITP Fellow 2024

Against the backdrop of the United States Capitol, Indigenous student leaders stand in solidarity, a testament to resilience, cultural pride, and advocacy. As representatives of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), the students gathered in Washington, D.C., during the 119th United States Congress to ensure that Indigenous voices remain heard. Photograph by Felipe J. Estudillo Colón (Laguna Pueblo), Institute of American Indian Arts.

Accessibility and inclusion at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Egypt



The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities gives great attention to people with additional needs, so the Museums Sector has established a dedicated department with the following objectives:

1. Making all museums accessible for people with disabilities.
2. Capacity building by training museum workers on how to deal with disabled visitors and raising their efficiency.
3. Inclusion by raising awareness among community members on how to work with people with disabilities, our duty towards them, and the necessity of preserving their rights.
4. Improving their skills through activities and artistic workshops to encourage them to visit museums and integrate them into society.



Educational workshop on making papyrus for blind and visually impaired

Training programme for museum curators on guiding the visually impaired with my colleague Heba Hassan ITP Fellow 2024

Gratefully, I had the opportunity to be responsible for people with visual impairment in the museums sector with the following objectives:

1. Making museums accessible; I made plaster models and replicas of some artefacts displayed inside the showcases, and they were installed inside some museum galleries, in addition to labels in Braille.
2. Improve staff qualification; I held practical training for museum workers on how to deal with people with visual impairment and how to make special guided tours and emphasize the importance of using facilities such as models, tactile books, or even reading pens.
3. Community awareness; I held sessions for university students to make partnerships aimed at aiding their fellow students with disabilities.
4. Museum education; I held many educational and artistic workshops for them to acquire new skills and to enhance their sense of touch, which encouraged them to visit museums. Some examples of workshops: making papyrus, weaving, printing on cloth, sunken antiquities, excavations, hieroglyphic signs, and many others.

In addition to special guided tours for blind and visually impaired.

Rasha Ali Attia Abd El-Mageid
Curator and Head of Temporary Exhibition Department, Alexandria National Museum
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2011



What is a museum if it is not accessible to the people it intends to serve? The definition of what a museum is aligns it to service and that is what a museum does. Gone are the days when museums were only accessible to aristocrats. These days museums are the hub of communities, which makes accessibility and inclusion crucial for achieving the cultural and educational mission of these institutions.

Making museums accessible means making them work for people of all walks of life. It means creating spaces where people of all abilities, backgrounds and identities can get to know other cultures aside from their own and engage with exhibits in such a way that makes one feel the world is one despite different cultures and languages.

Accessibility goes far beyond enabling an individual access to an exhibition or space. These days, exhibitions encompass digital access and the inclusive design of services and experiences. Technology has given us a broader understanding of what a museum can offer as regards to education and making known a subject, enhancing cultural experiences so they are accessible to all. It has also made it easier for people with disabilities to engage with exhibits and navigate museum spaces. This way, the museum plays an important role in accessibility. Making museums accessible has been a hot topic for museum bodies across the world, striving to ensure their museums are more accessible and welcoming to all.

Museums unable to achieve this have somewhat marginalised their communities and non- native speakers who are interested in other world cultures. In every country or community there are diverse cultures which means there are diverse audiences. The museums in

this category fall short of broadening the reach of their audiences. Every museum should be able to represent other cultures from around the world aside from its own, they should be able to represent diverse histories and perspectives fostering a richer understanding of cultural heritage. Accessibility enhances learning by providing multiple ways to learn about an object or the culture of a group of people. Museums have a social responsibility to serve all members of its community regardless of age, status, or race. It should be able to reflect a commitment to social justice and equity.

To be accessible, museums need features to make everyone feel welcomed and make the space usable. For example, how can a wheelchair user visit a museum with no ramps, no elevators? How will they be able to navigate? Where is the clear signage to show how to navigate around the galleries? Does the museum have provision for non-sighted guests? Are there exhibits in Braille? Museums should be more accessible and enjoyable for all. The importance of inclusion cannot be overlooked, museum professionals have come to understand this and have made inclusion a necessary part of the museum workings. I have been involved in an exhibition where we have had to provide the information on an object because the function of the object was totally different from what was displayed! This was brought to our attention by an elderly gentleman whose great grandfathers had used the object; it was synonymous to their culture.

How do you celebrate diversity if not through inclusion? We can only bridge histories when we understand the role inclusion plays in exhibitions. Every exhibition reflects us and our society. Inclusion is important as

it ensures that diverse voices and perspectives are well represented. By doing this, we can acknowledge and honour histories, cultures and the contributions of various groups. This is crucial to avoid marginalizing or overlooking a certain group or culture. Inclusion plays an important role in cultural preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage ensuring that diverse cultural artefacts and practices are recognized, valued, and kept for future generations to come.

Museums are mirrors of society so they must strive to remain relevant in a changing world as societies become more diverse. Accessibility also increases attendance in the sense that when museums are more welcoming, they attract a larger audience creating potential revenue. Accessible and inclusive museums can also enhance local tourism bringing visitors who seek out destinations that priorities these values.

Community engagement and inclusion encourages feedback and collaboration. When communities are involved in the planning and designing of exhibitions and programs their voices are heard and represented creating a unique and enriching experience for all concerned. Museums can also strengthen their relationship with local communities in this way. When you engage diverse groups in the creation and interpretation of exhibitions, you build trust and encourage community involvement. This collaborative curatorial practice leads to better exhibitions with dynamic presentations that enrich visitor experience.

One cannot exhaust the importance of accessibility and inclusion as they are numerous, but it is important to note that both are not merely add-ons for museums, they are the pivot for which every museum should stand on. It enriches the cultural landscape, promotes understanding



and fosters a sense of belonging for all visitors. As much as museums serve as vital cultural and educational resource for all members of society, they can be said to be the foundational principles that enhances the relevance of the museum, its impact and effectiveness in the community where it is located. Its service is not only enriching the community, but it also builds relationships and increases understanding across diverse populations.

Cynthia Iroube
Chief Curator, National Commission for Museums and Monuments
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2011



Community engagement projects with younger audiences in museums in Nigeria.



The Ministry of Culture has embarked upon an ambitious project of the digitisation of the collections of the government museums with the twin purpose of making effective utilisation of technology in museum management and bringing the collections of these museums closer to the audiences by making them available for online viewing over the internet. In this endeavour, the Ministry of Culture, through the technical expertise of Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) Pune and the Art Institute of Chicago, got standardised software entitled 'Jatan' for implementation in its museums.

National Digital Repository 'Museums of India' provides a universal and cohesive access to theme-based collections and artefacts irrespective of the physical and geographical locations of museums. Under the scheme, funds will be provided by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India in the form of grants to various museums for the digitisation of art objects in the museums across the country and for making their images and catalogues available over the internet. The scheme will have two components, one relating to the establishment of infrastructure (central server linked to museum level server/computers through dedicated channels) and the other relating to digitisation of all collections, cross-indexed with fuller details on a template basis. The aim of the museum would be to have an online database of its collections readily available on its website for online viewing by the general public.

A virtual museum involves following major activities: -

- Metadata description and linking of digital contents
- Providing online access to heritage information resources
- Access through mobile devices and kiosks

National Repository and Portal for Museums of India is an example of a virtual museum that provides online access to ten national museums in different geographical locations. Such virtual museums are now directly accessible in classrooms. Virtual museums can be linked with classroom education for providing various learning resources to benefit the students.

It is very effective for digitisation of documents and books. This software must be used along with DIGITALAYA (digital accessing tools).

The National Digital Repository, 'Museums of India' provides accessibility and inclusion in a true sense. It is perhaps for the first time in the world that 10 national museums in India are made accessible online from one portal. This project is funded by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. During 2013, Ministry of Culture started the Vivekananda Memorial Museum Excellence Programme (I received this fellowship in 2014-15) in collaboration with The Chicago Institute of Art, USA. As part of this programme various existing software solutions available in India were evaluated and finally C-DAC's JATAN: Virtual Museum Builder was selected for standardised implementation across national museums.

The digital collections created using the JATAN: Virtual Museum Builder are integrated in the national digital repository for giving public access through the national portal. I was the nodal officer of JATAN in Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata from May 2014.



Some of the most important Museums of India e.g. National Museum of New Delhi, Indian Museum and Victoria Memorial Hall of Kolkata, Salar Jung Museum of Hyderabad, Allahabad Museum of Prayagraj, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalay (IGRMS) of Bhopal and the 3 National Galleries of Modern Art at New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru respectively function under the control of the Ministry of Culture in various capacities. Apart from these, the Archaeological Survey of India also has site museums at 44 locations spread throughout the country in proximity to important archaeological sites.

In the first phase of the digitisation project the Jatan software has been implemented in 10 selected Museums of the Ministry / Archaeological Survey of India as detailed below:

- National Museum, New Delhi
- Indian Museum, Kolkata
- Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata
- National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai
- National Gallery of Modern Art, Bengaluru
- Allahabad Museum
- Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad
- Nagarjunakonda Museum
- Goa Museum

The features and technical specifications of the repository are:

- Collaborative framework for historians to collectively enrich the information
- Support for integration of documentation of antiquities in multimedia formats
- Integration of 360-degree panorama
- Dedicated metadata forms for anthropology, antiquity, textile, science museums
- Search and retrieval
- QR Code generation
- Data package export facility for DARSHAK (visitor) Mobile App.

As a Nodal officer of JATAN from 2014-19 and a recipient of Vivekananda Memorial Museum Excellence fellowship I am sharing the information about this repository of Indian museums hoping for it to be accessed by the ITP family in the UK and worldwide in aid of inclusion and accessibility in its truest sense.

Joyee Roy
Head of Documentation and Curation,
Victoria Memorial Hall
India, ITP Fellow 2011

Your collection in focus

Masterpiece for all: the collection of Royal Mughal swords at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) is adding to its collection a group of four swords belonging to the renowned Mughal Emperors; Akbar (r. 1556-1605 CE) – Jahangir (r.1605-1627 CE)- Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1666 CE) and Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707 CE). These historical artefacts of the 16th to 18th centuries are currently on display in one of the permanent galleries in the museum. These objects hold stories of one of the important dynasties in world history and are among the latest attractions in IAMM.

As a curator and a student of history, this opportunity opens me up to fresh information, particularly about the four important emperors that ruled during the golden era of the Mughal Dynasty. Data gathered throughout the examination and research phases revealed astounding details about the emperor's relics. Although the shape of all four sword's handles look almost the same, they had different lengths in the size of their grip. These tulwar sword handles were also decorated in different motifs such as iris flower, grapes with interlocking vines, and six-petal flowers shaped from stones insets. The high-quality blades of the emperor's swords are European made, mainly by the Venetians, Germany, and Italy. This basic information suggested that the construction of these masterpieces was customised based on the specific requirements, and preferences of the emperors.

This collection is meant to be shared with others. All swords were showcased in a special exhibition and later put on permanent display in the gallery for visitors to enjoy. The curator responsible for the section provided ample background stories and information for the visitors. Details of inscriptions (such as Persian couplet, and honorific title of the emperor), and symbols (such as royal umbrella in gold inlaid, and sword-maker identification) are highlighted and explained in the display.

Specialised visitors, namely researchers and educational institutions could benefit from historical artefacts in the museum collection. School and universities for instance, could work hand in hand with museums to complement conventional methods of learning and teaching with object-based study to uphold the quality of understanding in their lessons. Artefact masterpieces should be able to be appreciated by everyone, rather than be hidden from public view.

Zulkifli Ishak
Senior Curator, Islamic Arts Museum
Malaysia, ITP Fellow 2017

Sword of
Aurangzeb -
Zulkifli Ishak
ITP 2017

Your collection in focus

Ink Container

This object is part of a new collection at National Museum Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State Northwest Nigeria and is one of the most important objects in the museum's collections. It is a 19th century clay ink container used by an Islamic scholar during the formative period of the Jihad campaign which led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate under the leadership of Sheikh Othman Bn Fodio. The object was donated by an Islamic scholar who inherited it from his great grandfather.

The container tells a story and highlights the significance of education, and the important role played by Muslim scholars in the propagation of Islamic education to the general public in support of the Jihad movement in different parts of Hausa land. They have written many books in Arabic, Ajami and Fulfulde.

We are planning a new exhibition in 2025, and as part of our commitment towards diversity, inclusion and accessibility we want to include Arabic, Ajami and Fulfulde in our text labels.

Dikko Idris
Deputy Director (Curatorial), National Commission
for Museums and Monuments
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2011



19th century
clay ink container

Displaying the dead: human remains from Ancient Egypt
at the Ulster Museum



The *Life and Death in Ancient Egypt* gallery at the Ulster Museum, Belfast contains material of historic, artistic, cultural, and spiritual importance to understanding and learning about the Ancient Egyptian civilization, as well as its connections to Northern Ireland and Egypt today.

Within the gallery are displayed the partially unwrapped mummified remains of a young woman, Takabuti, as well as the coffin of Tjesmutperet. These human remains, collected during the 19th and 20th centuries, leave complex and challenging legacies for us today. Whilst some people value how they offer important insights to and inspire interest in Ancient Egyptian society, others question whether it is ethical and respectful for them to be on public display.

In November 2024, a refresh of the gallery was delivered, shaped by a consultation group, with a focus on decolonisation and the ethical treatment of human remains from Ancient Egypt.

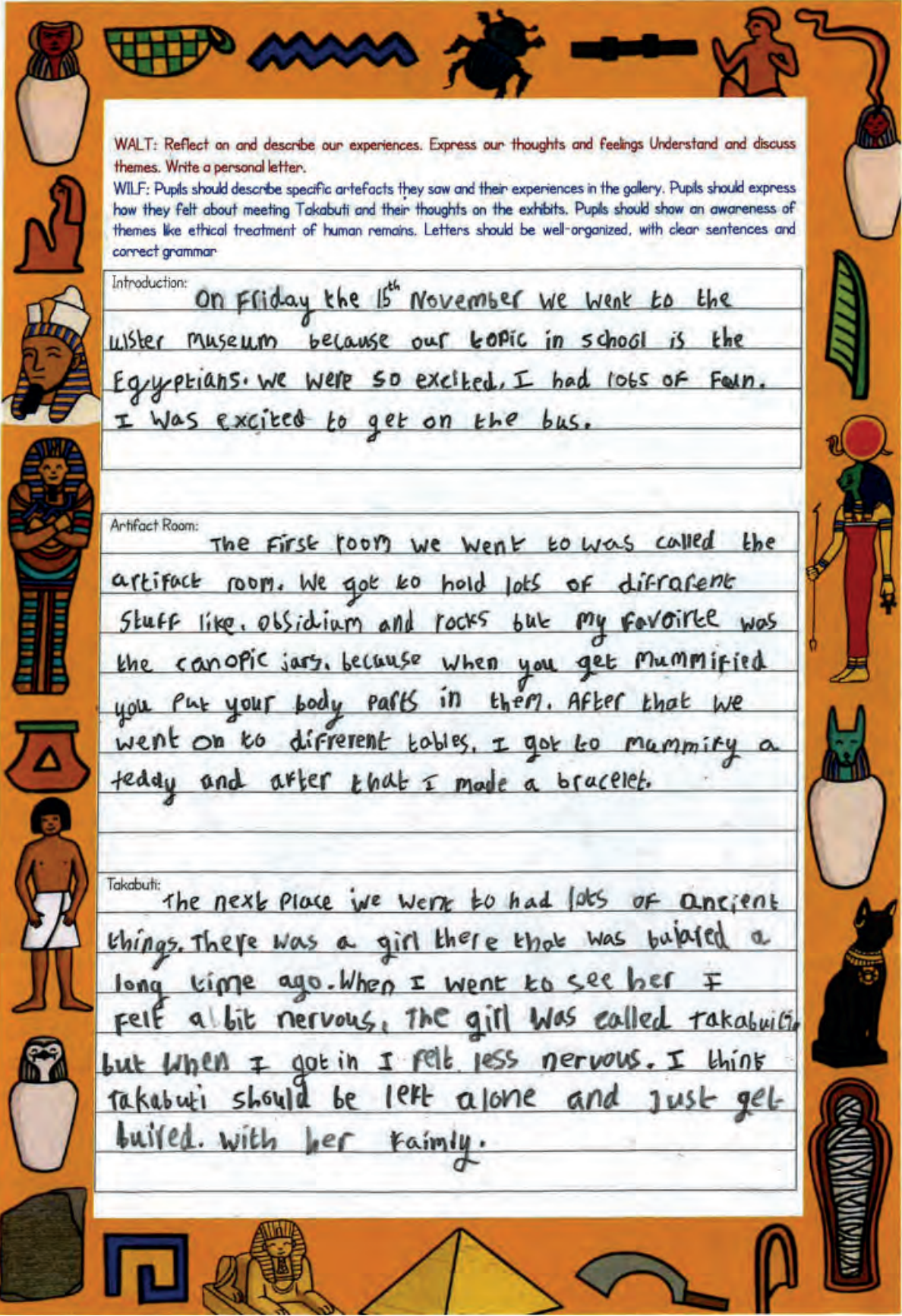
Central to the refresh are new interpretative panels, labels and a video to better humanise Takabuti's story, explore different perspectives, and initiate debate through provocative questions around the ethics of displaying ancient Egyptian human remains. The video exploring viewpoints on the ethics of display of human remains from Ancient Egypt can also be viewed on the Ulster Museum's website, www.ulstermuseum.org/permanent-exhibition/life-death-ancient-egypt.

An opportunity for visitors to feedback is offered through a touch screen, and school children have been invited to write letters. The feedback questionnaire can also be accessed on the Ulster Museum's website.

A new wall in the gallery displays Takabuti and gives visitors a choice as to whether they wish to view her remains. For those that choose to, the wall offers a more private viewing experience. Added to this area is a large image of an Egyptian Goddess, conveying the spiritual journey to the afterlife. 3D models of gallery objects for handling as well as scents of ancient Egyptian embalming processes have also been added to provide interactive experiences focused on celebrating the sophistication of Ancient Egyptian society.

Consultation on the gallery is ongoing with Egyptian communities, specialists, and our audiences, and is part of a much broader piece of work at the museum called Inclusive Global Histories which addresses decolonisation, inclusion, and diversity.

Triona White Hamilton
Curator of Modern History and World Cultures,
National Museums Northern Ireland



Did you know that?

Memorial Museums in Rwanda: spaces for healing and reconciliation



Genocide in Rwanda is a sad reality that Rwandans have found difficult to live with, despite evidence of the massacres that happened on 7 April 1994.

My attendance of the 2024 ICMEMORHI Conference in Rwanda gave clarity on the causes of the genocide. The films that I had previously watched about the genocide did not do justice to the fierceness of what occurred. Every session I attended at the conference brought tears to my eyes, as well as the question – “Why will humans do such callous acts in the name of ideology?”.

Museums in Rwanda curate exhibitions to give closure to young people whose parents are unable to relay events of the genocide. Asking questions to which they do not get an answer can lead to depression and a lack of self-esteem. Museums and NGOs in Rwanda are committed to bridging these gaps, by giving closure and preaching reconciliation to various audience groups through comics, literature and autobiographies of victims.



Assumpta
(NGO
Coordinator)

Participants
touring a comic
exhibition

The use of new media, comics, literature and spoken stories are trans-generational approaches. The messages are clear and should encourage the younger generation to visit museums more often and keep them engaged.

I cast my mind back to the ICOM Prague 2023 definition of what a museum is. “A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, a place that fosters diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing”. This definition emphasises the usefulness and relevance of museums.

Sincerely, Memorial Museums in Rwanda have served humanity. These museums not only provide space for remembrance and education but also foster healing and dialogue among communities. It has succeeded in collating both tangible and intangible collections from protagonists, most of whom are members of the communities. This sense of responsibility has given birth to peace, reconciliation, and inclusive museums in Rwanda.

Most assuredly, Rwandans can say *Never Again* because they have put deliberate actions into those words by confronting a painful past. Museums in Rwanda play a significant role in building a peaceful and united country and other African museums and the world at large can learn from this.

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade
Assistant Chief Curator, National Museum of Unity
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2022

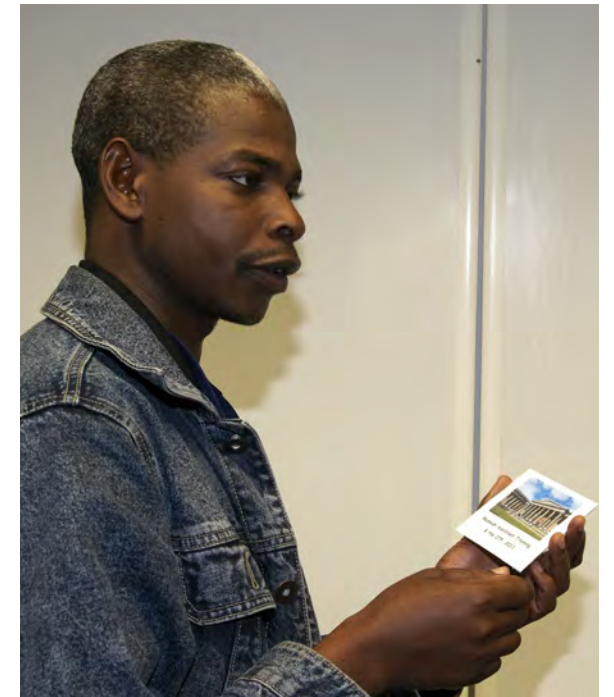
Did you know that?

The Living Space project

The Living Space project is an initiative of the Director General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments Nigeria, Mr. Olubille H. The project has been designed to allow young creatives to showcase their art for free at the National Museums across the country. The project seeks to address the issue a lot of creatives have of not having affordable physical spaces to showcase their work to the public. The museums should serve as a bridge between the arts and the people.

Moreover, the living Space Project is one of the most important programmes of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments to address the issue of accessibility and inclusion in Nigerian museums.

Dikko Idris
Deputy Director (Curatorial), National Commission
for Museums and Monuments
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2011



Dikko Idris
(Nigeria, ITP
2011) during
his time at the
British Museum.

Did you know that?
Mask making monasteries of Majuli

Nestled within the mighty Brahmaputra River in Assam, northeast India, lies the world's largest river island - Majuli. Majuli translates to 'that in the middle' and is an apt name for this unique landmass created by the continuous shift of the river's channels. It has taken over centuries to form and today it covers over 800 square kilometres!

This island-world is home to stunning natural wonders, migratory birds from Siberia and the Neo-Vaishnavite sect associated with creation of the Vrindavani Vastras, one of which is housed in the British Museum.

Neo-Vaishnavism was an offshoot of the Bhakti movement that swept India in the 14th and 15th centuries and was initiated by Saint Sankardeva. It centred on Krishna worship, monastic living and the sharing of Vaishnava philosophy through music, dance, theatre, and storytelling. Bang in the middle of Brahmaputra, isolated from the mainland, Majuli was an ideal choice for this monastic tradition to blossom.

I grew up a short ferry ride away from Majuli, learning of the annual seasons of Raakh (dance-dramas, also called Bhaanona) and of floods that took away portions of the island bit-by-bit. It was only last year that I made a trip here to witness something else. I was looking for a monastery at Samaguri, known for its expertise in theatre mask making. The masks, locally called mukha, are entirely hand-made and involve only natural materials

such as bamboo, cotton, cow dung, and clay. Starting with a bamboo frame, the mask is developed by alternating layers of clay and cotton. It is finally dried out and details are painted on.

A mukha usually represents a character from the great Indian epics - Ramayana and Mahabharata. What fascinated me most were the larger-than-life, extremely elaborate costumes (they really shouldn't be categorised as "masks" at this scale) - each a feat of engineering in itself!

Take 'kabandha' for instance, who, in the Ramayana, is a headless monster. How does one make a mask for something that does not have a head? The maker's response was to put a face on the torso, complete with eyes, a nose and threatening fangs! It is ironic and whimsical and makes one wish they could enter the maker's brain to learn what they were thinking of when creating the character.

One can only hope to see the mukha in all its glory, being worn by an actor during Raakh. For now, a souvenir brought back from Majuli would have to suffice.

Shubhasree Purkayastha
Manager, Education, Museum of Art and Photography,
Bangalore
India, ITP Fellow 2024



One of the resident artist-makers at Samaguri Sattrā

Samaguri Sattrā Mask Making Centre - Exterior



Did you know that?
What's new on the ITP website?



We are always trying to keep the ITP website up to date with new information and resources for our global network. Last year we had a large update to the content of the website, including new features and resources. Since then, there have been a few new additions to the website which we want the network to be aware of:

Every year we update the Annual Programme resources on the Course Resources page. These are documents, links and resources shared with the latest ITP cohort during their Annual Programme experience. At the end of each year, we share these new Programme resources on the website for the whole network to access. The resources are categorised by the different sessions we ran during that year's ITP. The Course Resources on the ITP website are password protected. If you would like to access this page, please contact the ITP team.

We have a new Fellows' Publication on the website. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed, Assistant Professor of Archaeology and Museum Studies, Ain Shams University (Egypt, ITP 2013), has shared his research paper outlining plans for the creation of the first Children's Museum in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. You can read Mohamed's detailed and insightful paper by following links to Fellows' Publications on our website. If you have any publications you wish to share with the ITP network, do get in touch!

Keep an eye out for updates on our Legacy Project pages, which are regularly updated with the latest reports, films, and toolkits. We regularly add new reports to our ITP Research and Conference Grants page. Most of the reports from grantees in 2024 are now available to read on their own dedicated page. You can also see the ITP report and fellows reports from our last programme at the Museums Association conference.

Finally, did you know we have an ITP noticeboard? On our Advisory Board page, you will find news and opportunities from around the culture and heritage sector. These notices are shared by the ITP team and the Advisory Board. Do keep an eye out for new posts on the noticeboard, we hope you find them useful!

We endeavour to keep the ITP website an informative and useful online resource for the ITP global network, with a variety of material available for fellows to access. If there is something you would like to see on the ITP website in the future, do get in touch with us! And of course, do not forget about the ITP blog. We are always keen to hear from you on there!

George Peckham
ITP Coordinator, British Museum

Spotlight on
Reviving the life of cultural properties at the Cultural Heritage Museum of University of Ibadan

Cultural properties are powerful tools in determining the past, present, and future. They are of essential importance to the cultural heritage of our nation for archaeology, pre-history, history, literature, art, and science which need to be kept, protected, and preserve for future generations. These cultural properties have been abandoned, filled with dust and deteriorating on daily basis at the cultural heritage museum of University of Ibadan. That was until the conservation team were called to bring these cultural properties back to life.

The conservation of these cultural properties began 14 January 2025 and lasted until 27 January 2025. The process involved taking photographs of the current situation of the collections, followed by cleaning with soft brushes to remove dust and dirt from the surface of the objects. It also involves the application of chemicals after cleaning. There is an application of a 50/50 mix of ethanol and distilled water to brighten the surface of the wooden collections.

Among the collections, there are some that are made of iron materials with the tendency to rust. Acetone was applied to stop the rusting effect and stabilise them to prevent further rusting.

Some restoration work was carried on wooden collections with alternative materials being used to show what lost parts of the object would have looked like, as well as filling cracks. These materials include wooden dust, colourless uhu gum, pestle, and scalpel.

The management of the University of Ibadan is putting in place the necessary arrangements to construct an adaptable structure to house these cultural properties to give them a befitting display and a proper storage facility to elongate their lifespan.

Kolawole Samson Adeyera
Conservator, National Museum of Unity, National Commission for Museums and Monuments
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2023



Removal of dust from a Masquerade regalia.

Spotlight on
India Maritime Heritage Conclave at New Delhi



The conclave was designed to showcase spiritual and cultural exchange discussing India's role in spreading philosophies and practices through maritime routes. It also reflected on raising awareness about the conservation of maritime archaeological sites, ancient ports, and lighthouses. My present role in the upcoming maritime museum in the country under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways allowed me to be a part of the organising team curating this event with sessions on crucial topics related to archaeological findings and museum display techniques. I was fortunate to be a part of a panel discussion with stalwarts from the museum sector in the country.

The session focused on the evolution of display techniques that are shaping exhibition designs in museum galleries, preserving heritage and educating visitors. The conclave was also conceived to engage with foreign delegates and maritime museum delegates to explore the

possibility of obtaining material from their museums for the upcoming maritime museum. The new museum will also become a focal point for student engagement and maritime education, blending history, science, and technology under one roof. There was international participation from countries that share a rich maritime history with us including representatives from Italy, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, South Korea, UK, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Philippines. The sessions, chaired by historians, museum professionals, and archaeologists, are recorded and transcribed for upcoming galleries of the museum in content development and conceptualisation. We have also incorporated the feedback form to upgrade such events in the future through the format created by ITP.

Namrata Sarmah
Independent Museum Consultant
India, ITP Fellow 2018

Spotlight on
Family trail for 'Chay Reds, Ferrous Black: the untold stories of Indian trade textiles in Sri Lanka' at the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), Bangalore



The Museum of Art and Photography (MAP) in Bangalore, India, is currently running an exhibition titled Chay Reds, Ferrous Black: The untold stories of Indian trade textiles in Sri Lanka. Envisioned as part of a longer series of textile themed exhibitions, Chay Reds, Ferrous Black highlights maritime histories between India and Sri Lanka in the 18th century.

As part of the learning resources that accompany the exhibition, I developed a family trail and kid's labels. It was an exciting challenge to take up, especially because textile artefacts are not appealing to younger audiences at first glance. The challenge was to make the artworks interesting, provide appropriate historical context, and essentially make these rare pieces of historical textiles come alive. With regards to museum exhibitions, curatorial text may not offer enough accessibility by assuming that one already has some understanding of the artist or context. A kid's label doesn't assume any of this but instead allows people (not just kids) to engage with art directly and make meaningful connections.

The trail that was developed for Chay Reds, Ferrous Black included multiple intervention points in the gallery - family friendly labels, an activity worksheet, and rewards to be collected at the completion of an exercise - all the while following a fantastical narrative of impersonating an 18th century merchant-adventurer.

A selection of objects from the gallery became a market for the visitor to perform a trading exchange. At the completion of an exercise in the activity worksheet, equivalent to making a sale, the visitor is rewarded with a sticker-coin. The goal is to collect all the stickers by the end of the trail, and this is done through various exercises such as creative writing and storytelling, aiming to develop family bonds through art.

Shubhasree Purkayastha
Manager, Education, Museum of Art and Photography,
Bangalore
India, ITP Fellow 2024



Spotlight on

Museum dilemmas in the face of modern thefts

Museums are places of great sensitivity for society. Museums relate to our daily lives, habits or traditions and have played a part in creating or sustaining these at some point in the last 150 years. From what they store to what their collections teach, museums play a role in creating healthy societies with a healthy future.

At the beginning of this year, a shock wave was felt in Romania and the wider museum family when four artefacts of great value to Romania were stolen from a museum in the Netherlands. On the morning of 25 January, the robbery shocked everyone and brought to light the pressing issue of the black market and the looting and trafficking of artefacts.

I remember the morning of 25 January perfectly. While checking the daily news, rumours appeared of an explosion and a potential robbery at the Drents Museum. In a matter of minutes, it was announced by different public institutions that an unimaginable theft had occurred at 3.45am. It had lasted less than three minutes and in that time four valuable artefacts from the international exhibition *Dacia: Empire of gold and silver* were stolen from Drents Museum in Aasen, Netherlands. That morning, reactions flooded in from public institutions,

museum staff, and regular people. The stolen artefacts created a wave of empathy and curiosity, with people identifying with the ancient artefacts and demanding their recovery and punishments for those that enable this to occur. Nothing good comes from this sort of behaviour but this many voices must somehow be heard.

The Dacia: The Empire of gold and silver exhibition was opened in Aasen on 7 July 2024 and displayed some of the most precious gold and silver artefacts of Romania. Dated between the 20th century BC and 3rd century BC, they represent some of the highest value creations of people who lived on these lands nearly three millennia ago. Their value to us and the world cannot be estimated but in terms of insurance the entire collection was valued at 30 million Euros. The value of the four stolen artefacts, a gold helmet and three gold bracelets, was estimated at up to 6 million Euros. The exhibition was supposed to close its doors and return home just one day after the robbery on 26 January. It did so, sadly, partially.

The unfortunate event will have long lasting consequences. The exhibition was regarded as a national effort to improve the country's image across borders. As an international exhibition, it gave a rare look at some of Romania's



spectacular works of art that brought well-deserved attention. Sadly, it got the attention of thieves too.

In terms of culture, art, and history we are inestimably poorer but in technical terms we talk about 3kg of pure gold. This event has created a spiritual and cultural void in Romanian society and if the artifacts are not recovered, it will not be filled. Among the stolen artefacts, the most iconic was the Coțofenești helmet, dated somewhere in the 4th century BC and comprised of 770 g of pure gold, it was accidentally discovered in 1938 in Coțofenești village, Prahova County. It is presumed to have come from the inventory of an ancient Dacian king or important military ruler. The helmet is anthropomorphic decorated with bulging eyes and double eyebrows in an attempt to create a serious, domineering look around the owner. From 1972 it was displayed in Bucharest, and it has been the focal point of several international exhibitions across Europe. It was an iconic element in Dacian movies created in the communist era and it was also a well-known symbol on banknotes, stamps, and special monetary issues. Since its discovery, the helmet has been sold and resold as its value continued to grow. It's worth noting that a Dutch entrepreneur offered a €100,000 reward for its return or for any news that would help secure its return. It has been said elsewhere that 6 million euros has been paid by the Dutch government to compensate for the great loss.

The other three artefacts have an even more complicated history. The intrigue of Dacian gold is well known across the world. It is said that Dacians did not pay with their gold, choosing instead to store it, so during the ages

they gathered huge amounts. The Romans were said to have taken more than 100 tons of gold from Dacia nearly 2,000 years ago and since then the stories about the Dacian gold still flow. In more recent times, several gold Dacian bracelets were recovered in a worldwide police and special forces effort to recover them from various black markets. Stolen and stolen again, the history of these bracelets is quite amazing. Lost again now, their story is not likely to end soon. The exact number of them (24-26) is still questioned and because they were looted, we might not ever know. Their weight is between 550g and 1200g of gold and their prices exorbitant. 11 of them are known to be missing and with the Dutch robbery, that number grew by three more.

We must learn from these mistakes. This sad story, and so many like it, will be used by museums to pay even more attention to security considerations. If the theft techniques evolve, we must evolve too and fight against the illicit trade of historical goods and the black market. This robbery shocked many of us and I hope everyone will reconsider their security measurements moving forward.

With the hope of their recovery in my mind, I hope that my article next year will talk about their recovery and return to Romania.

Ioan Oprea
Conservator, National Museum of the Union, Alba Iulia Romania, ITP Fellow 2019



Dacian bracelets, image copyright Drents Museum

Gold helmet of Coțofenești, image copyright Drents Museums



ITP Senior Fellow 2025

My name is Chantal Umuhoza, and I have been working with Rwanda Museums for the past 12 years, spending most of that time as a museum curator. In 2018, I had the privilege of attending the British Museum International Training Programme. My partner placement was spent at National Museums Northern Ireland.

I participated in two legacy projects, in 2022 I attended the Museums Association conference and exhibition that was held in Edinburgh, and in 2024 I attended the ICOM UK Conference. My experiences with the ITP were transformative; they ignited my passion for museums, profoundly shaped my career, and provided me with invaluable insights. Additionally, I have developed lasting connections and friendships that I treasure.

The knowledge and relationships I gained through this programme have been instrumental in my professional and personal growth. Now, I am honored and thrilled to return to the British Museum as a Senior Fellow for the ITP 2025.

What excites me most about returning as a Senior Fellow is the chance to collaborate and learn from new fellows from all corners of the globe, as well as to provide guidance as someone who understands the program from the fellows' perspective. It is also an opportunity to expand my professional network and reconnect with BM colleagues and museum professionals in the UK.

I embrace the challenge of this senior role and am eager to collaborate with the ITP team and partner museums to ensure this year's programme is both enjoyable and informative for the new fellows. I hope to provide insights and updates throughout the programme, showcasing the incredible learning opportunities and the bonds we will create along the way.

Chantal Umuhoza
Curator, Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy
Rwanda, ITP Fellow 2018

From Amazonia to the world: retelling the Nawa story

In this interview, Ykaruni Nawa shares insights into his ITP Fellowship at the British Museum, showcasing the importance of self-demarcating the collection. In dialogue with the head of The Santo Domingo Centre of Excellence for Latin American Research (SDCELAR) Louise de Mello, Ykaruni talks about how the Nawa people have been fighting for more than two decades for the recognition and demarcation of their ancestral territory in the Amazon region of Acre. Ykaruni arrived at the British Museum to retell the Nawa story and made history by being the first Indigenous person from Latin America to participate in this programme. This interview is a gift to his community, as he shares his experience using a language they are familiar with.

Portuguese Interview: <https://www.sdcelarbritishmuseum.org/noticias-pt-pt/da-amazonia-para-o-mundo-autodemarcando-a-presenca-nawa-nos-museus/?lang=pt-pt>

English Interview: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/amazonia-world-retelling-nawa-story>

Santiago Valencia Parra
Digital Curator SDCELAR, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, British Museum



Nubia Museum Activities

On the occasion of the UNESCO foundation and the signing of the convention on cultural heritage protection, the Nubia Museum prepared an archival exhibition on 16 November 2024. The exhibition, *Nubia Campaign; Yesterday and Today*, shared UNESCO's role in the salvage of Nubian monuments.

The Nubia Museum celebrated the memorial official opening on 23 November 2024, organised by the Nubian Folk Show and honoured retired colleagues.

In December 2024 I attended a training course titled Science and Craft of Wooden Heritage in Cairo. The training was organised by the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science – Slovenian Node (E-RIS Si) in collaboration with several other organisations and the UNESCO Regional Office in Cairo.

Yasser Abdelrady Mohamed Mohamed
Conservator, Nubia Museum, Aswan
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2019



ITP News 2025

ITP Advisory Board

Through 2025 the ITP Advisory Board has continued to support and advise the ITP team on all aspects of the annual programme and legacy projects. Their focus this year has been around projects which can support the Museum to celebrate 20 years of the International Training Programme. Key to that are plans for an online exhibition Global object in focus; investigating opportunities for collaborative projects between ITP network members; a new series of online subject specialist sessions and a new ITP publication, all of which will offer our global network opportunities to collaborate.

The Annual Programme

For 2025, the Museum will develop and deliver a six-week summer programme, welcoming participants to the UK from 7 July to 15 August. The Annual Programme will see us welcome 20 participants from 18 countries.

ITP Research and Conference Grants 2025

Our research and conference grants have proved a popular source of financial support for fellows to attend conferences and carry out their professional research. Reports on the completed grants are shared on the ITP website to provide resources and information to our wider network. These will continue through 2025 and will add to the 39 support grants given since 2021.

Museums Association Conference and Exhibition, Cardiff

In previous years, ITP fellows have joined us at the Museums Association (MA) conferences in Glasgow (2016), Manchester (2017), Belfast (2018), Brighton (2019), online in 2020 and 2021, (Edinburgh) 2022, Gateshead (2023) and Leeds (2024). Feedback amongst the alumni to these opportunities has been overwhelmingly positive.

For 2025, the ITP will again invite up to five ITP Fellows to join us in the UK for a week-long programme of visits, tours, and networking with our UK and programme partners which will sit alongside the MA conference. The fellows will be selected through an open application process based on the themes of the conference.

Ancient India co-creation project
Working with colleagues in the Department of Asia and Learning and National Partnerships, the ITP is supporting Siddhant Shah (India, ITP Fellow 2022) to join us at the British Museum for a co-creation project. The project is centred on the upcoming special exhibition *Ancient India: living traditions* and will focus on the creation of a sensory trail for autistic adults (18+) visiting the exhibition.

Claire Messenger
International Training Programme Manager
British Museum



An ITP catch-up in Türkiye

Ali Demirkiran, Archaeologist, Ephesus Museum (Türkiye, ITP 2023) and Ian George, Historic Places Manager, Lincolnshire County Council met at Ephesus Museum. Ian was delighted to see the site, hear more about Ali's work, and to meet the Director.

An ITP catch-up in Rwanda

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade, Assistant Chief Conservator, National Museum of Unity, Ibadan (Nigeria, ITP 2022) met with Chantal Umuhiza, Curator, Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy (Rwanda, ITP 2018) at the ICMEMOHRI Conference 2024. The conference, focused on African Memorial and Human Rights Museums building A More Sustainable Future For Peace, took place in Kigali, Rwanda from 28 July to 1 August 2024.

An ITP catch-up in the UK

Nelson Abiti, Curator and Senior Conservator, Uganda National Museum (Uganda, ITP 2013) met with Campbell Price, Curator of Egypt and Sudan at Manchester Museum. Nelson was in Manchester for a research visit hosted by Njabulo Chipangura, Curator of Living Cultures.



Ali Demirkiran (Türkiye, ITP 2023) and Ian George at Ephesus

Ciprian Dobra (Romania, ITP 2019, Senior Fellow 2023) and Elif Büyükgencoğlu (Türkiye, ITP 2023)

Nelson Abiti (Uganda, ITP 2013) with Campbell Price (Curator of Egypt and Sudan, Manchester Museum)



An ITP catch-up in Romania

Ciprian Dobra, Alba Iulia Municipality Counselor and Cultural Objective Curator, Principia Museum (Romania, ITP 2019, Senior Fellow 2023) and Elif Büyükgencoğlu, Curator, Istanbul Archaeological Museums (Türkiye, ITP 2023) met in Romania. Elif was able to see Ciprian take part in a Roman reenactment in Alba Iulia and became instantly famous, appearing on national television, to share her thoughts on the event!

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sarawak Museum

Dora Jok (Malaysia, ITP 2016) came with a delegation from Sarawak Museum to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the BM. In November 2023 the British Museum signed an MoU with the Sarawak Museum, which will kickstart a project of research into Sarawak and Borneo objects. The MoU was signed in the Round Reading Room by Director, Nicholas Cullinan and Sarawak Museum Director Nancy Jolhi and the event was attended by ministers from the Sarawak department for Tourism, Creative Industry, and Performing Arts.

Finally, we would like to send our congratulations to the following people:

Heba Khairy Metwaly, Senior Curator, The Grand Egyptian Museum (Egypt, ITP Fellow 2017) who successfully gained her PhD in Cultural Heritage and Museums Studies. Her thesis, entitled Collection Management and Documentation Practices in Egyptian Museums: A Comparative Study, investigates the collection management and documentation policies, procedures, and the digital collection management systems (databases) of three major museums - the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York, the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (EMC), and the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) in Giza. Through a comparative analysis, this research highlights the strengths and weaknesses in the current policies and procedures in the three case studies. The study explores the history of collection management, both globally and within Egypt, and offers recommendations for enhancing the GEM's practices by leveraging best international and national standards. It drafted a comprehensive and updated collection management policy for the GEM, ensuring the preservation of Egypt's cultural heritage while creating a more accessible and engaging visitor experience.

Aprille Tijam (Philippines, ITP Fellow 2019) who has taken on the role of Associate Director and Head of Exhibitions and Collections at Ayala Museum.

Mohamed Mokhtar (ITP 2015 & Senior Fellow 2018) has moved to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. He is currently a Member of the Executive Office of the Chairman of the Tourism Promotion Authority where he is working on strategies and partnerships to market Egyptian destinations globally.

Hayk Mkrtchyan (ITP 2014 & Senior Fellow 2017) who has taken on the role of Head of International Partnerships at the Cultural Development Foundation in Armenia.

William Nsuiban Gmayi, Head of Communications and Public Relations, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (Ghana, ITP 2021) who has started a PhD at Oxford University.

We would also like to say a huge thank you and goodbye to three of our UK Partner representatives. **Pat Allen**, Curator of World Cultures at Glasgow Museums; **Sarah Gore**, Teaching Museum Manager, Norfolk Museum Service and **Ronan Brindley**, Lead for Learning & Engagement, Manchester Art Gallery have all moved on to new adventures. We will miss them being part of our partner museum team and wish them lots of luck in the future.



Sarah Gore with ITP Fellows 2017

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