

# Culture&

## Whose Heritage 3.0

Curatorial Fellowships 2024-2026

### Royal Museums Greenwich

Nydia Swaby and Hannah Cusworth

### Museum of the Home

Makella Ama Ketedzi

### Scarborough Museums and Galleries

Molly Newham and Katie Crowther

Curatorial research reports commissioned by Culture&



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**MUSEUM OF  
THE HOME**



**Scarborough**  
Museums and Galleries  
Shaping the world around you

# CONTENTS

## Contents

EDITORIAL NOTE.....	3
Culture& x Royal Museums Greenwich Curatorial Fellowships, 2025-26.....	4
Culture& x Museum of the Home Curatorial Fellowship, 2024-26 .....	10
Culture& x Scarborough Museums and Galleries Curatorial Fellowship, 2024-26 .....	17
Conclusion.....	21

## EDITORIAL NOTE



The Whose Heritage & 3.0 Curatorial Fellowships are the third iteration of a series of collaborations with museums in which Culture& has sponsored the recruitment of talent from underrepresented backgrounds to help diversity the curatorial workforce. This implements a key recommendation made in the report *It's About Handing Over Power* that Culture& co-authored for the Art Fund with Museum X. The Fellowships are named in honour of the great cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall, who wrote:

Unless the younger generation has access to...cultural repertoires and can understand and practice them, to some extent at least, from the inside, they will lack the resources – the cultural capital – of their own 'heritage', as a base from which to engage other traditions.

Stuart Hall (1999) 'Whose heritage? Un-settling 'The heritage', re-imagining the post-nation,' *Third Text* 49: 3-13.

# Culture& x Royal Museums Greenwich Curatorial Fellowships, 2025-26

## Introduction

Royal Museums Greenwich comprises four museums: the National Maritime Museum, Royal Observatory, Queen's House and the Cutty Sark and sits within the Maritime Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage Site. Together, these collections and sites tell the story of Britain's maritime heritage and former empire through sea power, navigational science and the history of art.

## Nydia A Swaby and Hannah Cusworth

The Culture& Whose Heritage Fellowship has been transformational at Royal Museums Greenwich (RMG), introducing new curatorial methodologies and expanding the demographic profile of the Curatorial & Research team. Hannah Cusworth and Dr Nydia A Swaby were appointed as a job-share in November 2025. Through their research, programming, and curatorial interventions they have made substantial contributions to how RMG approaches colonial histories and interpretive practice. Their work has already influenced internal thinking and opened up new possibilities for how the collections can be activated. RMG has successfully applied to the Art Fund's Empowering Curators strand, which will allow them to develop their practice for a further three years as Curators of the Atlantic.

Their original brief was to develop an inclusive model for interpretation at the Queen's House art collection. They worked on individual rooms to intervene in existing displays, reframe narratives, and test approaches to co-curation, while also pursuing new research into objects, images, and themes that bring to the foreground the perspectives of people of African, Asian and Indigenous descent



Preparation for Culture&'s Long Table event in the Great Hall at the Queen's House, photo: Natalia Janula

They also jointly worked on developing a Black feminist methodology, guided by Black feminist care and collaboration and became valued members of the art collection curatorial team. This evolved into a methodology grounded on reconsidering whose viewpoint is given in the paintings and their interpretation. Most of RMG's historic art collection provides the view from the ship, or the coloniser's perspective. This should be recognised as an entangled gaze and using Rick Hill's methodology, foreground 'the view from the canoe'.<sup>1</sup> Hannah and Nydia have reconsidered the ocean as means of repositioning the subject and instead giving the 'view from the water', which will be the theme of their Empowering Curators Fellowship.

Hannah and Nydia's Black feminist approaches have impacted wider curatorial practice by foregrounding memory and storytelling; unearthing and amplifying marginalised histories; challenging traditional hierarchies of knowledge through decolonial and intersectional frameworks; addressing overlapping systems of oppression through theories of intersectionality and care; and by partnering with artists, scholars, and community partners to reimagine collections.

<sup>1</sup> Rick Hill, "View from the Canoe vs. the View from the Ship: The Art of Alliance," *Ab-Original 2*, no. 2



*The Keeper of All the Secrets* Long Table event at the Queen's House, photo by Natalia Janula

## Key outputs of their curatorial fellowship:

### ***Contributions to the launch and programming for *The Keeper of All the Secrets*, by Jacqueline Bishop:***

Nydia drafted discussion prompts for the Long Table conversation – a format of unmoderated public debate devised by feminist artist Lois Weaver. The curatorial fellows both contributed to the invite list, ensuring that a diverse audience including Black feminist scholars and artists were present.

During the launch evening, Hannah and Nydia also made a quiet but significant intervention that reflected their Black feminist practice of care. When a group of guests arrived during the opening speeches, they both sensed a subtle shift in the atmosphere among some RMG staff. It was a familiar dynamic in which Black visitors can be prematurely assessed or misread because of appearance, timing, or assumptions about belonging. Drawing on their shared commitment to hospitality, attentiveness, and relational care, they greeted the guests warmly, offered support, and created space for them to engage with the work fully and comfortably. In reflecting on this moment, they recognised it as an example of how their practice actively shapes more inclusive approaches to interpretation and audience engagement. It also highlighted the ongoing importance of representation within staffing and the creation of environments in which the communities reflected in Bishop's work feel welcomed, centred, and respected.



*The Keeper of All the Secrets* Long Table event at the Queen's House, photo by Natalia Janula

Shaping of the programming for International Slavery Remembrance Day (ISRD) 2025 using Jacqueline Bishop's display as the theme. Nydia mentored and Hannah supported another young Black woman curator, Amouraé Bola-Chin. This supported in the curation of ISRD enabling her to draw connections between Bishop's work, objects in the collection, Black cultural memory, and her own emerging curatorial voice. Nydia delivered a well-attended public talk in the Caird Library, using Black feminist curatorial and archival practice to interpret items from the collection in dialogue with Bishop's themes.

### ***Developing new interpretation strategies for the Queen's House 2026 refresh***

Hannah led, alongside Nydia and Katherine Gazzard (another art curator), on developing a co-curation project for the *Enlightenment Views* room, with a focus on the Indigenous people represented in the paintings and prints of William Hodges from James Cook's second voyage, 1772 to 1775, through the voices of the Pacific diaspora. She facilitated a workshop during the RMG residency of carver and cultural educator, Robbie Atatoa. The co-curation requires extra time, however, Hannah's research supported the methodology of 'The View from the Water', which will be the theme of the whole Queen's House 2026 Refresh.

Hannah and Nydia collaborated with another art curator, Maya Wassell-Smith, on the 'Feeling Blue' room, inspired by Alberta Whittle's artwork of the same name. This was used as a case study to curate using a Black feminist lens. Nydia linked Whittle's artistic use of blue with longer histories of indigo as a resource shaped by African and diasporic women's knowledge and labour. In parallel, Hannah has supported historical research into the life and legacy of Penelope Steel, a Jamaican-born, mixed-race woman who produced nautical charts in eighteenth century London.

Steel's maps, often backed on indigo-dyed 'blueback' paper, open a critical entry point into the entanglement of gender, mapping, and colonial economies. They commissioned artist and walker Remiyya Badru to create a new artwork, building on her previous research on Penelope Steel. This work will be co-developed with the curators, using embodied practice to reveal submerged histories and exploring critical fabulation to re-present their research of Steel's history through the artwork.

Nydia curated three historic photographs of market women from the Caribbean and West Africa, for the Jacqueline Bishop *The Keeper of All the Secrets* display, as visual testimonies of women who carried ancestral knowledge, sustained communities, and asserted their presence against the erasures of empire.

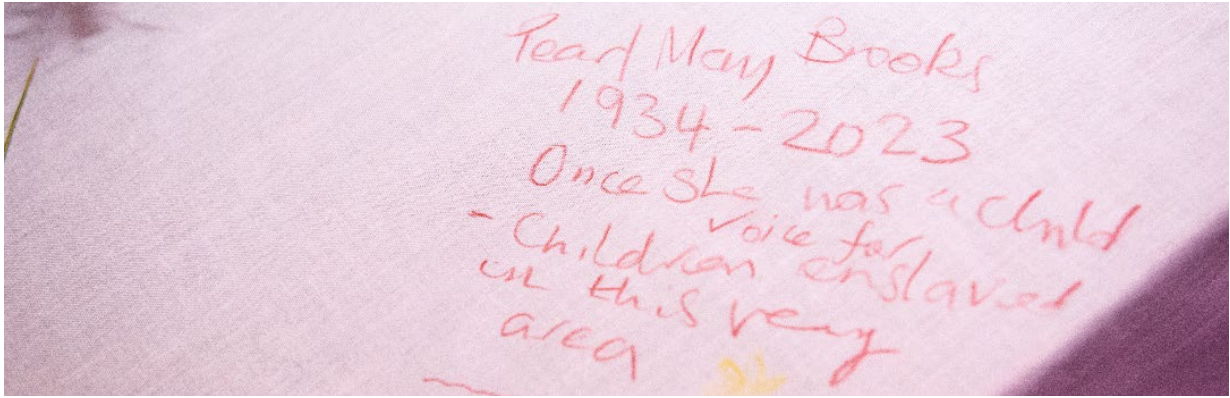
Nydia researched a portrait of a young Jamaican girl named Shirley, taken aboard the *Jamaica Planter* in 1971, a cargo ship operated by the Jamaica Banana Producers Steamship Company, which carried fruit and a small number of passengers between Jamaica and Britain. This will form part of the new displays *Crossings* in the Orangery, centring on post-colonial migration and the diasporic experience in the UK. Using Black feminist approaches to archival absence, Nydia has read Shirley's image not only for what it depicts but also for the silences and erasures that surround it.

Nydia is writing label texts linked via QR codes to longer essays on RMG's website on the market women photos and *Shirley*, bringing together additional images, archival fragments, and resources, inviting visitors to reflect more deeply on the broader histories of labour, migration, and empire that shaped these women's lives. Nydia supported the Practice-based Caird Fellowship of artist Sharon Walters, offering research insights into Black feminist themes that resonate with her practice, to be shown in commissioned artwork in the 2026 refresh.

## Further Projects and Activities:

As both Nydia and Hannah previously sat on the Atlantic Worlds Reimagined Advisory Board, they gave a workshop on this project for the Transatlantic Legacies in Museums Forum and sit on an internal Atlantic Worlds Gallery Working Group. Hannah has also supported the development of Sensitive Histories Training for staff, focused on the interpretation and care of the Atlantic Worlds Gallery. Hannah has also contributed her expertise to a documentary on Sir Francis Drake, to foreground the legacies of slavery and colonialism within maritime history.

Nydia and Hannah were active participants of the art curatorial team's reflective practice sessions, designed as a critical and collaborative informal sharing space. Nydia's film *Daughters of Diaspora*, was the focus of the first session. Hannah organised a session with Lauren Working, Lecturer in Early Modern Literature and member of the Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies, who shared new research on early Stuart women's involvement in English colonialism, with a particular focus on Queen Henrietta Maria. Hannah and Nydia's work will be continued through their role in the Empowering Curators programme.



*The Keeper of All the Secrets* Long Table event at the Queen's House, photo by Natalia Janula

# Culture& x Museum of the Home Curatorial Fellowship, 2024-26

## Introduction

Museum of the Home (formerly the Geffrye Museum) is housed in almshouses which were built in 1714. The money to build them came from the legacy of Sir Robert Geffrye (1613–1704) who was involved in the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans. In 1911 the London County Council (LCC) bought the building and gardens. The gardens represented 14% of the open space in Shoreditch, a densely populated area of London. Designers, artists and architects at the time were petitioning for an exhibition space for arts and crafts. The LCC saw that they could give new purpose to the almshouses by turning them into a museum, and on 2 April 1914 the Geffrye Museum opened to the public. The name of the museum was changed to the Museum of the Home in 2019 after an £18m refurbishment following the controversy about the origins of Robert Geffrye's wealth and to better reflect the museum's focus on home and home life.

## Makella Ama Ketedzi

### A Recipe Through Time

The first few months of my fellowship was spent researching new approaches in response to the brief of 'curating public programmes around the themes of sustainability, climate change and the home'. The result of this was A Recipe Through Time, a public programme curated in collaboration with artist, chef, and horticulturalist; Josephina Kwando-Yaa Abuah; founder of Rice and Beans. The event took place in the form of a roundtable dinner, with guests invited to sit in a roundtable and engage in discussions about the transatlantic journey of ingredients used in African and Caribbean cooking. A key part of this workshop was an oral history element, which prompted guests to share a physical or anecdotal response to one of the following prompts:

- Something that reminds you of 'the kitchen'
- A smell that takes you back (to a place of your choice)
- Something that reminds you of a recipe passed down (or sideways)

This was the first event I had hosted with the Museum, it was a useful chance to familiarise myself within the space and get a first-hand experience of present and future possibilities. The most invaluable part of this programme was the feedback acquired both from attendees, colleagues and collaborators.

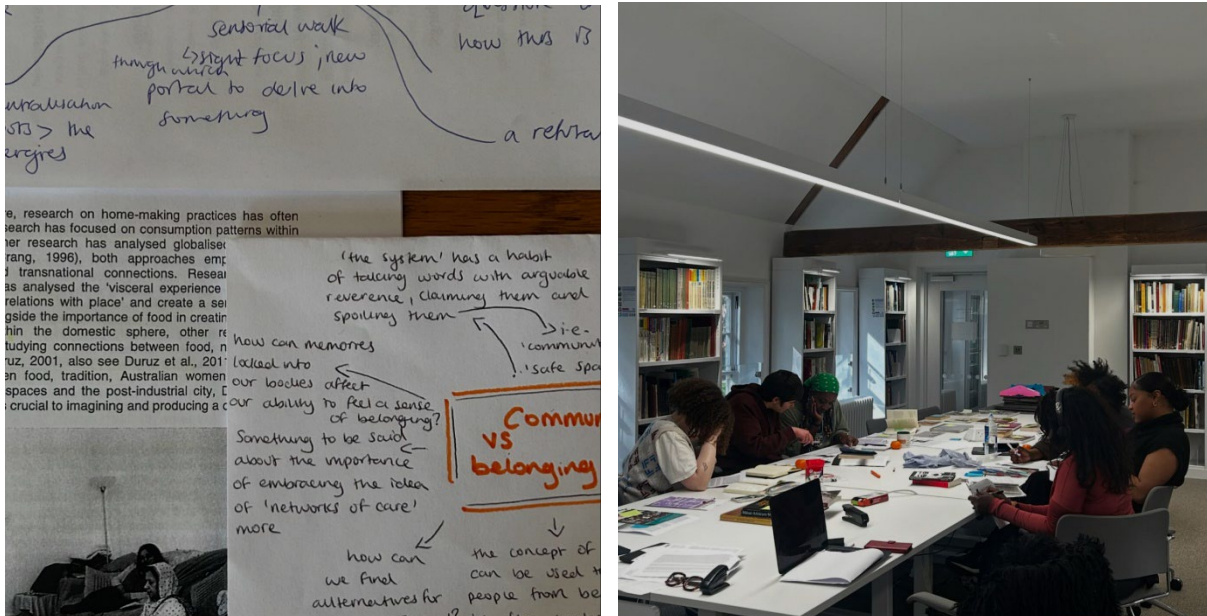


## **Sifting workshop series**

This is an ongoing series involving collective research and knowledge exchange around the archives, followed by a shared lunch and film screening amongst all participants. The workshop series is the first part of research into a speculative exhibition exploring shared homes with strangers as a means of survival in our current economic climate. A particular focus is the consequent phenomena of blended/contested cultures within house-shares and questions around what it means to have 'a room to your name'. Participants involved were selected via an Open Call which amassed a high volume of applications, eventually narrowed down to a cohort of 8.

## Session 1: Sitting with the Archives

A collective dive into archives around precarious housing histories, community heritage publications and inter-borough photojournalism in the Collections Library at Museum of the Home.



## Session 2: Self-Directed Archive Research Day

A chance for the cohort to engage with archives local to where they live and re-assess their relationships to the process of researching in/around the archives. In order to do so, a series of prompts and an 'archive bank' has been provided as a skeletal framework for this research.

## Session 3: Standing Around the Archives

A focus on 'accidental archives' outside of institutions and in/ around our neighbourhoods. This session involved a short walking activity, focusing on the senses as a source of embedded archive. This was followed by an exploration of June Jordan's work as an architect developing housing projects in Harlem.

## Session 4: Writing Around the Archives (using the speculative)

A focus on wordplay and entering a dialogue with the archives, drawing from the tool of speculation as utilised by writers Octavia Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin and Saidiya Hartman.



**Session 5** is tied into the Unhomely Project and will gather findings into a final showcase and communally designed newspaper.

## Uzo Egonu exhibition



### Uzo Egonu - Exhibition

Uzo Egonu (25 December 1931 – 14 August 1996) was a Nigerian-born artist who settled in Britain in the 1940s, only once returning to his homeland for two days in the 1970s, although he remained concerned with African political struggles. According to Rasheed Araeen, Egonu was "perhaps the first person from Africa, Asia or the Caribbean to come to Britain after the War with the sole intention of becoming an artist." According to critic Molar Wood, "Egonu's work merged European and Igbo traditions but more significantly, placed Africa as the touchstone of modernism. In combining the visual languages of Western and African art, he helped redefine the boundaries of modernism, thereby challenging the European myth of the naïve, primitive African artist."<sup>2</sup>

After acquiring Egonu's prints in 2024, Museum of the Home showcased Uzo Egonu's works as part of an exhibition opening in April. My role in this project is that of a co-curator, researcher and public programmer. I launched an activation evening on 12 May 2025 and commissioned a griot and kora player (Kodialy Kouyate) who opened the space with a collective singing circle and performance.

<sup>2</sup> This biography is from Wikipedia under an [Attribution-ShareAlike Creative Commons License](#).



### **Uzo Egonu - Book Club Public Programme**

Following this, I also led on curating two further public programmes: a tour of the exhibition followed by a book club discussion with Casual Readers Book club around Buchi Emecheta's 'Second Class Citizen'. Here, there was a focus on overarching themes of immigration, culture and mythology. This event sold out in five minutes!



### **Uzo Egonu - Gong Bath Sound Healing Workshop**

This was a two-part workshop. The first half consisted of a communal folklore sharing

circle whereby participants had a chance to engage in a retelling of a folktale by artist and poet Chloe Filani, followed by a group discussion on individual relationships with storytelling and folktales and how this has evolved from childhood to adulthood. The second half of this workshop consisted of a Gong Sound Bath Healing session facilitation by Reiki Healer, Jaha Browne. This event was also sold out.



# Culture& x Scarborough Museums and Galleries Curatorial Fellowship, 2024-26

## Introduction

Scarborough Collections is the name given to the museum items owned by Scarborough Borough Council, including over 1,500 works of art. The collections are cared for on behalf of the Borough by Scarborough Museums Trust. It includes Scarborough Art Gallery, Scarborough Town Hall, and the Rotunda Museum as exhibition places. The main strength of the collection lies in its rich representation of local topography, including subjects of the town and area, and marine works by local artists. Important works in the collection include paintings by John Atkinson Grimshaw and a large oil painting by Frederic, Lord Leighton, who was born in Scarborough. However, it is the collection's cumulative effect that makes it of regional significance rather than any particular work. (Contemporary Art Society).

## Molly Newham

I am an artist, researcher and curator who was born and lives in the North Yorkshire seaside town of Scarborough. I am fascinated by the fishing history and seaside heritage of South Bay.



As part of a Culture&-funded research fellowship, I have been researching the Scarborough Museums and Galleries collection, choosing new objects to display, and finding alternative stories to tell. With a focus on the working-class aspect of coastal tourism and industry, I created interventions in the Seaside Heritage Gallery at Scarborough Art Gallery. The Seaside Heritage Gallery is a step back in time display about Scarborough's seaside heritage. There are a range of objects including paintings, photographs, social history and taxidermy that recall an era of working-class seaside culture and expeditions along the North Yorkshire coast. My display is the first step in transforming the entire top floor of the art gallery into a multi-sensory seaside experience.

Drawing from the museum's collection, I created a display of objects including taxidermy, ephemera and photographs along with a short film exploring the history of Scarborough's South Bay.



Drawing from the museums' collection, I created a display of objects including taxidermy, ephemera and photographs along with a short film exploring the history of Scarborough's South Bay.

### **Katie Crowther**

The Rotunda Museum is one of the oldest purpose-built museums still in use in the United Kingdom. The curved grade II listed building was constructed in 1829 as one of the country's first purpose-built museums. Situated in the English coastal resort of Scarborough, North Yorkshire, it houses one of the foremost collections of Jurassic geology on the Yorkshire Coast. Described as the finest surviving purpose-built museum of its age in the country, the design suggested by William Smith, 'Father of English Geology'. Smith's pioneering work established that geological strata could be identified and correlated using the fossils they contain. Smith came to Scarborough after his release from debtors' prison. The dramatic Jurassic coastline of North Yorkshire offered him an area of unrivalled geological richness to study

Full of fascinating objects, the Rotunda Museum is home to Gristhorpe Man, a unique Bronze Age skeleton. Found near Scarborough buried in a tree trunk, Gristhorpe Man is the best example of a tree burial in the UK. There is also the Speeton Plesiosaur - a fantastic marine reptile from the lower Cretaceous period, found near Filey. Scarborough's Lost Dinosaurs is an exploration of Jurassic Scarborough and its residents. (Text adapted from Wikipedia and the Rotunda Museum website).

**Scarborough Collectors**

The Rotunda Museum opened in 1829 and was built by the Scarborough Philosophical Society "to examine the great laboratory of the earth." The early museum collection relied heavily on donations from member of the Society who, in exchange for their artefacts received a life membership.

Individuals such as William Bean II and John Williamson were renowned collectors of geological specimens and at times were often in competitive rivalry. Both men spent their whole lives in Scarborough but corresponded with collectors all over the world.

The first keeper of the museum was John Williamson who was hired at a salary of £30 a year. Williamson had studied how to display and mount the specimens in the collection in Manchester and soon put these skills to good use. His wife, Elizabeth, also worked as housekeeper at the museum from 1838-1848 for £10 per year.

**Scarborough Inventors**

Dr William Harland (1787-1866) was a successful physician and established his own medical baths in Vernon Place, Scarborough. Throughout his lifetime, Harland held a variety of offices in the Society and upon his death donated his large collection of birds, eggs, shells, and fossils to the museum.

Harland was interested in the use of steam and developed a working prototype of a steam driven carriage. Ever the inventor, when his teeth became decayed, Dr Harland made himself new ones from the tooth of a hippopotamus.

Sir George Cayley (1773-1857) was a landowner, MP, and inventor who also supported the Scarborough Philosophical Society and the Museum. Cayley is known as the father of aviation and spent a lifetime studying aerodynamics. In 1853, he designed a glider that became the first ever manned flight when his coachman flew in it.

**Women Collectors**

In 1829 women made up 10% of the membership of the Scarborough Philosophical Society but it was 70 years before one of them was elected as an officer. While the Society limited women's scientific input, it was happy to accept their donations to the museum, of both artefacts and money.

Two major contributors to the Society during its early years were Frances Richardson Curren and Alice Lieder. Alice Lieder was born in Scarborough but left for Cairo as a missionary in 1835. She was extremely active in archaeological excavations and donated many of her expensive findings to the museum. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Lieder's excavations were carried out at the cost of Egyptian heritage.

Many women also donated to the museum on account of their relation to men in the Society. Maria Bean and Jane and Mary Tindall donated coins,

Frances Curren was a famous bibliophile and scholar, and her library contained 15,000 volume. She donated large sums of money.

My aim was to design and implement a new exhibition for the Rotunda Museum based on objects within the collection that spoke to underrepresented voices. The idea was that each cabinet would be emptied and replaced with new items from the collection. I have been welcomed into the team at SMG and been given a great deal of insight into the many different aspects of museum work. I appreciate the freedom I was given in the collections and greatly value the time I spent exploring the objects and items within the museum collection.

Although there was no opportunity to curate my own exhibition, the collections team was extremely welcoming and enthusiastic. They worked so hard to make sure my voice was heard and went above and beyond helping me work with the materials already on display. I enjoyed spending time in the stores and with the volunteers, and really feel like the collections team is where the museum thrives. I had a good experience in object handling, collection management, and a more realistic and pragmatic view of the state of museum finances. I hope that I have brought a fresh outlook to the museum. I'm still in the early stages of my curatorial career and I feel that my passion and enthusiasm helped to get things moving in a new and interesting way. I feel that I have provided fresh new ways for the collections to be interpreted and began to lay the foundation for new improvements in visitor experience.

I am grateful for the opportunity and feel that these fellowships are extremely beneficial for people in the early stages of a museum career. This experience has provided me with a good foundation of knowledge of museum work across a wide variety of areas. I appreciated working with different teams of staff and feel I have gained an insight into collections management, marketing and communications,

maintenance and infrastructure, visitor experience, as well as curatorial work. I am hoping that these skills will help me secure a permanent job in curation elsewhere.

## Conclusion

Although the curatorial fellows have greatly enjoyed their fellowship, they ask us to note their experience has also “made visible the structural challenges of embedding decolonial and Black feminist approaches within large heritage institutions.” The slow pace of decision-making, the uneven distribution of resources, and institutional inertia have at times stalled the momentum of work that critically addresses colonial legacies. This has required persistence, negotiation, and significant emotional labour of the fellows. Nonetheless, the fellowships underscored the urgent need for institutions not only to employ curators from underrepresented backgrounds but also to resource and empower them to lead projects that speak to their expertise and lived experience.