

Approaching Race and Empire in collections of nineteenth-century art and design



A resource pack for museums and galleries



Produced by the Race, Empire & the Pre-Raphaelites research group, 2023
Edited by Kate Nichols, Victoria Osborne and Sabrina Rahman
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Contributor Biographies

Dr Caitlin Meehye Beach is Assistant Professor of Art History and affiliated faculty in African & African American Studies at Fordham University. She is the author of *Sculpture at the Ends of Slavery* (University of California Press, 2022).

Emalee Beddoes is curator of visual arts at The Wilson in Cheltenham and previously worked as curator of modern and contemporary art at Birmingham Museums Trust and curator of art and exhibitions at Museums Worcestershire. She is interested in rural arts practice, as well as artist-led collections research and co-curation to find new ways to live with the past.
Email: Emaleebeddoes@gmail.com

Professor Deborah Cherry is Professor Emerita of Art History at Central Saint Martins, London. Publications include *Maud Sulter: Passion* (Altitude, 2015), *Art into Life: Essays on Tracey Emin* (Bloomsbury, 2020, co-edited with Alexandra Kokoli), and “Hello Girls, Hiya Sisters, Namaste Bhenjis” for an upcoming book on the artist Chila Kumari Singh Burman (Tate, 2023/4).

Dr Adrienne L. Childs is an art historian and curator specialising in race and representation in European and American art.
Email: ornamentalblackness@gmail.com

Professor Jennifer DeVere Brody is Professor of Theater & Performance Studies at Stanford University. Her scholarship in Black Studies, Gender/Sexuality Studies, & visual studies was funded by a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Bogliasco, Mellon and Ford Foundations, the Monette-Horwitz Prize for Research Against Homophobia, and

the Royal Society for Theatre Research. Her books, all from Duke University Press, include: *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity and Victorian Culture*, *Punctuation: Art, Politics and Play* and *Moving Stones: About the Art of Edmonia Lewis* (forthcoming).

Janine Francois is a Black Feminist-Killjoy, Writer, Academic in Exile, Time Traveller, Cultural Producer and a Consultant. Janine is a Visiting Lecturer at Royal College of Art and Ph.D student at Tate Britain and the University of Bedfordshire
Twitter/Instagram: [@itsjaninebtw](https://twitter.com/itsjaninebtw) or **blog:** itsjaninebtw.com

Dr Madeline Hewitson is a research assistant at the Ashmolean Museum where she most recently curated the exhibition ‘Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design’. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century British Orientalism and its intersection with the Old Testament in Victorian visual culture.
Email: madeline.hewitson@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

Dr Emily Mark-FitzGerald is Associate Professor in the School of Art History and Cultural Policy at University College Dublin, where she is the leading visual historian of the Irish Famine. Her work specialises in Irish art and visual culture, poverty, migration, and conflict, from the nineteenth century to present, across painting, engraving, photography, cinema and material culture.
Email: emily.mark@ucd.ie
Twitter [@emilymfg](https://twitter.com/emilymfg)

Chiedza Mhondoro works as Assistant Curator, British Art at Tate Britain. She specialises in the art of the eighteenth century and its wider social, cultural, political, economic, and international contexts. Chiedza is also interested in the ways in which we can uncover the forgotten or suppressed histories and experiences visualised in historic art.

Rachael Minott is a Jamaican-born artist, researcher and curator. She is currently Assistant Director of Engagement, Birmingham Museums Trust (job share), Head of Diversity Equity and Inclusion at the National Archives (job share) and Trustee for the Museum of Homelessness.

Farwa Moledina is a Muslim artist of Yemeni-Tanzanian heritage. She was raised in Dubai and currently lives and works in the UK. Her works prominently feature recurring patterns influenced by characteristics of Islamic design: symmetry, abstraction, and recurrence, and often materialise as expansive textile-based installations. Her work has been acquired by the Government Art Collection, Birmingham Museums Trust, The New Art Gallery Walsall and private collectors.

Dr Kate Nichols is Associate Professor in the History of Art at the University of Birmingham. She is currently writing a book titled ‘A Global History of Victorian Art’. This explores the mobility of both Victorian paintings and the art materials, models (human and animal) and objects essential to their fabrication, in the context of British imperialism.
Website: www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/historyofart/nichols-kate.aspx

Dr Gursimran Oberoi is a published art historian who specialises in the international reception of Victorian art. Her upcoming monograph, *Global Watts: Symbolism, Fame and Activism (1880-Present Day)*, examines the display and appropriation of symbolist

artworks by George Frederic Watts in the International Women’s Rights, Indian Independence and African American Civil Rights Movements. Gursimran is an Associate Teaching Fellow (University of Surrey), KCATO Manager (King’s College London) and Trustee (Watts Gallery – Artists’ Village).

Email: gursimranoberoi@outlook.com

Twitter: [@GursimOberoi](https://twitter.com/GursimOberoi)

Profile and Publications List:

www.surrey.ac.uk/people/gursimran-oberoi

Victoria Osborne is Curator of Fine Art for Birmingham Museums Trust and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham. Her exhibitions include *Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement* (American Federation of Arts in partnership with Birmingham Museums Trust, 2018-22), co-curated with Martin Ellis and Tim Barringer.

Email:

victoria.osborne@birminghammuseums.org.uk

Dr Bharti Parmar is an artist interested in subverting heritage crafts, systems and textile cultures to make political statements. Her current concerns are cotton, botany and India.

You can see her work here [www](http://www.bhartiparmar.com).

[bhartiparmar.com](http://www.bhartiparmar.com) and on Instagram [@bharti.parmar.studio](https://www.instagram.com/bharti.parmar.studio)

Email: info@bhartiparmar.com

LinkedIn [@BhartiParmar](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bhartiparmar)

Dr Sabrina Rahman is Senior Lecturer in Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Exeter. Her current book project explores practices of global design and diaspora from the nineteenth century to the present.

Alison Solomon is a multi-commissioned storyteller, curator and casting director working across the intersections of heritage, the Arts, entertainment and education.

Email: raythefilmcasting@gmail.com






Race, Empire and the Pre-Raphaelites is a research group of the British Art Network (BAN), which has been led and supported by Tate and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art with funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England from 2020-2023.

We formed the group to bring together museums holding collections of nineteenth-century British art and design with academics and artists to think about these objects' global contexts, particularly in relation to Orientalism and Empire. By using Birmingham's rich collections as a starting point, we wanted to facilitate broader conversations about how these objects might be viewed through the lenses of anti-racism and decoloniality, and how they could be displayed and interpreted with and for contemporary museum audiences. You can read about the events we held on our blog: <https://raceempireprb.wordpress.com/events/>. Although we cited the Pre-Raphaelites in the title of our group because of Birmingham's particular association with these artists, from the beginning the scope of our activity encompassed a wide range of Victorian art and design.

Discussions about decoloniality and anti-racism have been rife over the past few years, and with that have come opportunities as well as challenges. In the initial stages of writing our application for the BAN bursary, we all felt a personal unease with using the word 'decolonising' in the name of the Research Group. Decolonisation has become a buzzword in academic circles, and unfortunately much of the recent debate has lacked a sincere commitment to dismantling hegemonic structures in


museums and higher education. For example, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang warned about such empty practices in their 2012 article 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', and sadly it seems that not much has shifted in the past decade, especially in terms of making meaningful change.¹ Our 'compassionate friend' Janine Francois also drew our attention to the fact that even the term decolonising still centres the coloniser. In the end, however, we decided that the word had to be used; we do believe that we still need to try to decolonise collections, and we saw the development of this Research Group as an opportunity to effect change on a micro-level, while remaining mindful of the inherent limitations of the process. Our intention is to grant agency to stories that have been marginalised or omitted in the history of nineteenth-century art and design.

Another challenge that we are conscious of is the fact that academia and the museums sector is overwhelmingly White.² While we believe we have succeeded in creating a network that includes more people of colour than is usually the case in art and design history, there is still a lot of work to do. We follow the guidelines published in the Royal Historical Society "Race, Ethnicity & Equality" report, and have made good use of our small-ish budget in ensuring that precariously employed speakers are remunerated fairly for their labour.³ We have also asked that White members of the group critically reflect on their positionality in relation to race, empire and privilege, and demonstrate a commitment to the decolonisation of institutions and anti-racist activity.



Some of the questions discussed in group meetings over the past three years include:


How might museum interpretation move beyond an anonymous institutional voice?




How might museums work ethically with contemporary artists of colour around historic collections?



How can museums make sure their audiences are involved in all aspects of the display and interpretation of objects?



Should museums provide advance warning about distressing content for visitors? If so, how?



The resource pack cannot possibly provide one-size-fits-all answers to all of these questions. Our focus is primarily on strategies for display and interpretation. It offers a set of case studies and examples as a practical starting point based on events and discussions emerging from the network's activities. In Section 1, art historians and curators provide new readings of Victorian art objects which foreground histories of race and empire. Although grounded in particular objects, these approaches could be widely applied across nineteenth-century collections. Section 2 explores contemporary artists' engagements with Victorian visual culture, and reflects throughout on the ethics of juxtaposing the historic and the contemporary, with a particular focus on responsibilities of care towards artists of colour.

Section 3 surveys a range of approaches to display and interpretation. If museums do reinterpret collections, it is essential to provide support for front of house staff and volunteers who will be engaging with visitors, and we would encourage museums to develop policies and training around this: there is more information on this topic available in the Further Reading and Resources Section of our blog: <https://raceempireprb.wordpress.com/further-reading-and-resources/>

We hope that the pack will encourage open conversations about histories of race and empire in collections: Victorian art was enmeshed with the global at every level, and recognition of this leads to richer understanding of these fascinating objects. Projects contesting historic racist imagery in nineteenth-century collections, often

centred on interventions by artists of colour, are long-established practices in museums. This has particularly been the case in regional collections, which have sometimes had greater freedom and agility to develop these initiatives than their national counterparts. Deborah Cherry and Jennifer DeVere Brody explore one example in their discussion of Maud Sulter's 1990 series MUSEUM (Gallery Oldham) in Section 2.⁴ Museums and galleries today may worry that they will be accused of being 'woke' or political by choosing to foreground these histories: however, the decision to remain silent about these histories is just as political as the decision to address them.

As co-convenors of the group, we have found the past three years of conversations to be a deeply enriching experience on both personal and professional levels.

We would like to thank the British Art Network, our network members for their generous and enthusiastic engagement, all the contributors to the resource pack and to our events, and especially Rupali Naik for her assistance with online workshops. We are grateful to Bharti Parmar for her generous and supportive contribution to our activities, including an unforgettable tour of her work at the Crafts Council.⁵ Graphic designer Sharonjit Kaur Sutton has transformed plain text into the beautiful object you are holding in your hands (or reading on a screen). Finally, particular thanks to our 'compassionate friend' Janine Francois, for their thoughtful and incisive questions, expertise, reflections and comments.



1 Reframing Victorian Collections

1.1 The Last and First of England: Pre-Raphaelitism, Migration, and Empire

Sally-Anne Huxtable

Sally-Anne Huxtable considers Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England* (1852-55) with respect to intersecting histories of migration and colonialism. By discussing how Donald Rodney's drawing *First of England* (1983) and Derek Jarman's film *The Last of England* (1987) both respond to Brown's work, Huxtable recasts the historical and contemporary urgency of the painting, illuminating diverse experiences of migration that can be traced back to the economic, political and social conditions of British colonialism.

Being given the opportunity to think about and discuss Pre-Raphaelite and Arts & Crafts artworks from a perspective of decolonising these artworks was a wonderful challenge at a moment when the precise meanings of the term 'decolonisation' itself are being debated and explored (see editors' introduction). Too often these interconnected Victorian art movements have been regarded, and denigrated, as deliberately ahistorical and nostalgic with a lack of concern with the world that created them, other than to rail against the modernity and industrialisation of the nineteenth century. Engaging in debates that acknowledge their relationship to narratives of colonialism and Empire can only enrich our understanding of art and the people and society that created and shaped it.

I was asked to write about Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England* (1852-5, Birmingham Museums Trust), a work which exemplifies the ways in which one painting can bring together so many of the personal, political, local, national and global anxieties and events of its time. This striking image

still feels profoundly relevant today and was also revisited by artists such as Donald Rodney and Derek Jarman, both of whom used it to explore ideas of migration and exile in 1980s Britain.

Although Brown's work was inspired by his friend the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor Thomas Woolner who left England in 1852 to seek his fortune in the Australian gold rush that started in 1851, the painting depicts Brown and his wife Emma Hill Brown as the anxious young couple sitting huddled with a babe in arms on the deck of a boat leaving England. They share the deck with a Hogarthian raggle-taggle of fellow migrants, as the white cliffs of Dover slip away behind them. At that time the somewhat impoverished Brown family were also considering migrating to British India, and from that perspective Brown can also be seen to explore his own feelings at the possibility of leaving England behind for the foreign familiarity of colonial life. The unspoken currency here is the centrality of land ownership to power and wealth in Britain. In mid-Victorian England, the agricultural downturn of the 'hungry 40s' saw thousands flee poverty in the English countryside to either find work in the mills, factories and businesses of Industrialising Britain, or to seek their fortune abroad in the Empire. The image of ordinary people leaving the countryside is displayed in many popular paintings of the 1840s and 50s, such as Richard Redgrave's *The Emigrant's Last Sight of Home* (Fig. 2 1858, Tate). In Ireland, the Great Famine of 1845-52 also forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee abroad to avoid starvation. One result of these mass migrations was the tragic consequence that people forced

to leave the English or Irish countryside might themselves become part of a process by which colonisers would displace many peoples from their own traditional lands.

It was another narrative of migration that British Jamaican artist Donald Rodney explored with his two drawings *First of England* (1983, Tate) which turned Brown's image on its head by changing the figures of the Browns to his own parents, and their first experience of England on board the SS Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948, a move prompted by Britain's need for workers. The very human sense of trepidation in the eyes of Brown's couple faced with the unknown is echoed by that of Rodney's parents, as well as the artist and the viewer's retrospective knowledge of the privations and racial prejudice they were to face. There is no visible babe in arms, but we know that the hand that shaped these images, although in this instance not born for another thirteen years, is the metaphorical hand of the child just glimpsed beneath the shawl in Brown's image. For Rodney there is also a sense of his parents being alone – no fellow passengers throng the deck of the ship, only the trepidatious couple.



Ford Madox Brown, *The Last of England* (1852-55), oil on panel
Birmingham Museums Trust 1891P24



Donald Rodney, *First of England* (1983), pen and ink, Tate Archive (TGA 200321/3/1) © The estate of Donald Rodney digital image © Tate

Both Brown and Rodney's images contain hope as well as anxiety, but there is little of that optimism in *The Last of England* (1987), Derek Jarman's poetic but apocalyptic filmic vision of 1980s Britain. Jarman's railing against what he saw as the homophobia, militarism, and inequality of the decade sees Tilda Swinton's character, the Bride, made a widow by the violence of British society when her new groom is shot. Her response is a drawn out howl of rage, in a memorable beach scene where she burns her possessions and rends her wedding gown with waves crashing behind her. At the very end of the film, in homage to Brown but with a sense of leaving rather than heading off to new possibilities, the Bride boards a boat with the white cliffs of Dover retreating in the distance.

That Brown's painting could help inspire such a visceral response over 130 years after it was painted, tells us much about the power of the artwork to capture the experience of migration and exile, be it economic, social or political.

1.2 Global Mining Industries and Elkington's 1851 Commemorative Wares

Caitlin Beach

The iconography of an 1850s silver-plated tray leads Caitlin Beach to explore the geographies and histories of metal extraction. Beach's essay draws attention to the importance of the materials out of which art objects are made. Tracing the origins of these materials can reveal otherwise concealed histories of colonialism and enslaved or indentured labour that were fundamental to the making of art objects.

For the occasion of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in 1851, the Birmingham-based metal goods firm Elkington, Mason, and Co. (later Elkington & Co.) issued a set of souvenir electrotyped wares. One of these objects was a lavish silver-plated tray, designed in collaboration with the illustrator John Leighton, which featured a large globe in high relief surrounded by vignettes of craft and commerce. The imagery of this tray and the material of which it is composed are, in a sense, self-referential. They index the world of industry and manufacturing from which the tray comes, and more specifically, the extractive economies to uphold that world. The scenes on the tray's shallow basin

are befitting of an object created to commemorate the Great Exhibition's triumphant celebration of British art and industry. An ornamental banner snakes around the edge of the central relief, bearing the surnames of figures from the history of design and manufacturing from the Italian Renaissance on: Benvenuto Cellini, Albrecht Durer, Johannes Gutenberg, and Hans Holbein, as well as modern British figures like Joseph Arkwright, James Watt, and Josiah Wedgwood. These names surround vignettes – nine in total – featuring scenes of art, artisans, and industry. Much like the longer tradition of Enlightenment-era occupational portraits or depictions of *métier*, each vignette condenses work into a single metonymic figure, shown labouring with the tools of his trade.¹

The centre of the tray features a large globe in high relief bounded by the words 'raw material,' 'manufactures,' and 'commerce'. The globe is turned to show a view of the Western Hemisphere, with various places labelled. This text seems inconsistent and haphazard, resembling more closely handwritten lettering than the stylised neo-Gothic script found on other parts of

the tray. Some continents are labelled (South America, Africa), but the North American landmass says only 'states'. Europe is labelled simply with the cities 'London and Paris'. There are also references to geography and bodies of water – the Sahara, the North and South Atlantic Oceans, and perhaps most strikingly, the label 'La Plata' at the edge of the eastern side of South America. This is the Rio de la Plata, or the River Plate, whose mouth opens at the border of present-day Argentina and Uruguay.

This reference to the Rio de la Plata is not at all arbitrary, for European colonial powers had long regarded the waterway as an important natural resource.² Indeed, the silver and copper necessary for electrotyping and electroplating were sourced through colonial circuits of extraction. In the 1840s, Elkington pursued investments in a joint-stock company called the River Plate Steam Navigation Company.³ The company's archival records reveal how they saw the river as a rich resource for their mining interests; in 1846, Henry Elkington wrote of his desire to 'permanently secure the navigation of the River Plate and its tributaries'.⁴ The venture failed because of geopolitical realities of the day, as the river was blockaded from 1845 to 1850 during the Uruguayan Civil War, itself a struggle over Argentine and Uruguayan sovereignty in the face of British and French military incursions. But Elkington nevertheless continued to source their silver under exploitative conditions in the so-called 'New World'; for much of the century they maintained ties to the Cornish-run silver mines of Real del Monte in Mexico, which operated through enslaved and coerced Black and Indigenous labour.⁵



John Leighton, designer, Commemorative tray or tablet (c. 1851), electroformed and electroplated copper, partly gilded, diameter 32.5 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1973M18

It is this history that animates the ornamental and refined – in multiple senses of the word – silver surface of Elkington's commemorative tray. The art of electrotyping was often regarded in its day as a modern marvel, a kind of latter-day alchemy in objects emerged fully formed from an electrochemical bath.⁶ Yet the metamorphoses to inhere in Elkington's electrotypes went beyond this scientific sorcery, and extended to the very real economies of extraction, transformation, and theft in the colonial mining ventures so central to their industrial enterprise.

1.3 Quintessentially English? Rethinking William Morris' *Textile History*

Gursimran Oberoi

What new stories can the processes of making reveal about objects of art and design? Gursimran Oberoi demonstrates the complexities of William Morris' engagement with Indian visual culture, and problematises the idea that his designs are quintessentially English.

Recognised internationally as a quintessential British textile from the Arts and Crafts Movement, William Morris' *Strawberry Thief* has become synonymous with 'Englishness'. Morris conceived the idea in the 1870s, experimenting with hand block-printing techniques long abandoned in England. He refined his technique over the course of thirteen years working in collaboration with Thomas Wardle, a noted silk dyer.¹ Since its copyright in 1888, Morris' *Strawberry Thief* has been a steadfast popular favourite, combining quality industry using colourfast cotton with a simple but beautiful narrative of thrushes stealing strawberries from an English country garden. Yet how has *Strawberry Thief* come to be considered as quintessentially 'English' or 'British' when its creation is implicated in the physical, creative and economic displacement of world cultures under British and European imperialism and colonialism?

By looking into the production process, we can appreciate the material influences of Indian agriculture, labour, textiles, designs, dyeing techniques, and Persian artistry. We can start to unravel the complexities between Morris' socialist and anti-colonial writings against exploitative labour, and his engagement with these very processes in textile making.² These accounts evoke the palpable tension between Morris' appropriation of Indian crafts and his

awareness of wider power disparities which become all the more significant when we consider the afterlife of *Strawberry Thief* internationally.

Indigo block printing lies at the heart of *Strawberry Thief*'s production. Dissatisfied with the Prussian blue printing in 'Tulip and Willow' of 1873 (Figure 2), Morris sought to create colour palettes that had individuality, purity, and luminescence. Indigo became central to this process. Both Morris and Wardle studied and adapted indigo vat dyeing processes developed in India, and documented their experimentation in the Merton Abbey Dyebook among other publications.³ As letters to family and friends evince, Morris' experiments left his hands and forearms 'permanently blue'.⁴ His toil mirrored the work of thousands of unnamed Indian labourers who for centuries had produced and dyed cottons and silks using the plant, *Indigofera tinctoria*. This plant is believed to have originated in the Indian subcontinent and has been used in dyeing processes for over 5000 years across Asia and Africa long before the arrival of Western powers.⁵

The colour palette in *Strawberry Thief* tries to replicate the depths of colour Wardle had encountered during his Indian travels and what Morris had seen in Indian textiles. The production process they developed immersed cotton repeatedly in a vat of indigo dye.⁶ A bleaching agent was then applied to a pearwood block to remove or soften the dye in key areas transforming the indigo colour into a white or pale blue. Observing red hues in Indian and Persian fabrics, Morris used alizarin from the madder root grown in South India on a

separate woodblock to dye the strawberries. This labour intensive process was repeated for the other colours. The vegetal dye weld was used to create the yellow that we observe on the birds' beaks and on the central flowers. This colour heralds from Eurasia and was also applied as a yellow overdyer onto the shades of indigo to create green leaves and shading. The gentle browns speckled over the thrushes' breasts were most likely made using the roots of British walnut trees or, as the historian Virginia Davis perceptively notes, the plant juice catechu which also stems from India. These materials, techniques and colourings which inform the production of *Strawberry Thief* were underpinned by nineteenth-century processes of Empire, in addition to the multidirectional movements of peoples, ideas and trade between Britain, India and Iran.

Given these fusional crafted histories, one would expect Morris to have expressed clear opinions on the subjects of Indian labour, textile production and economy. Edward Said has suggested that Morris was 'totally opposed to imperialism'.⁷ Morris rarely made any specific references to India in his writings despite relying on the resources, designs and production techniques of the indigenous population.⁸ Nevertheless, in 1879 he signed a letter published in *The Times* drawing attention to the potential negative effects British tastes might have on Indian crafts.⁹ This dichotomous nature of Morris' appropriation of Indian crafts and his knowledge of wider power disparities is particularly interesting when we consider the global afterlife of *Strawberry Thief*.

Since its creation, this print has become recognised worldwide as a symbol of English craftsmanship. Its mass production in wallpaper, bedding, curtains, lampshades, furniture, and clothing amongst a plethora of other objects has seen a revival of appreciation for William Morris in recent years. Nevertheless, this revival is not

uncontested: the poem '*Strawberry Thief Singing*' (2017), by the American Pakistani poet Shadab Zeest Hashmi, eloquently reminds us that:

*The thrush, caught jubilant, after stealing ripe fruit from the artist's garden, goes to a prison of textile, serves a sentence of centuries in cotton, needles passing through her feathers, stitches on the sigh (or the ghost of song) in her bill, on wings. She will be stretched on Raj furniture across the commonwealth, a souvenir in chintz, her crime displayed on bedspreads. She will hang from windows, a doll of the wind.*¹⁰

Hashmi's poem invites us to consider if the narrative depicted in *Strawberry Thief* echoes its creation. There is no doubt that William Morris created a beautiful timeless print which has captured our attention for more than a century. While he might turn in his grave at the relatively low-quality merchandise now available, the plethora of these objects reminds us of the fusional aesthetic histories to which Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement are deeply indebted.

William Morris (designer), *Strawberry Thief* (design registered 1883), cotton, 196 x 95 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1973M77



1.4 Figuring Blackness: The Ornamental Blackamoor

Adrienne L. Childs

Adrienne L. Childs explores the histories and power relations embodied in representations of the Black body in eighteenth and nineteenth-century European decorative arts, and reflects on how museums today might display these objects.

A pair of nineteenth-century figural torchères in the National Trust's collection at Polesden Lacey take the form of two Black females. Traditionally known as 'blackamoor' figures, they are decorative objects that feature Black bodies as ornamental motifs. The blackamoor figure has had a long and complex history in European decorative arts – one that reveals the troubling relationship between Black servitude and European wealth and luxury.

The decorative Black body became fashionable in opulent European furnishings such as guéridons, console tables, cabinets, and candelabra in the seventeenth century and remained so through the nineteenth. Although they are often considered a Venetian invention, they were created in workshops across Europe during the seventeenth century and in a variety of media demonstrating a widespread interest in the exoticism of Blackness. This racialised ornamental trope flourished in materials from silver to porcelain and signified courtly luxury, exotic excess, wealth, and taste. Although blackamoor motifs generally went out of favour in the twentieth century, they remained desired objects for collectors of European antiques as well as neo-baroque trends in interior design. Until recent years the blackamoor furnishings have been ignored or dismissed as relics of old-world luxury and afforded no critical consideration.

Now museums and historic collections are grappling with how to display and interpret these objects in ways that acknowledge their links to colonialism, servitude and the global dispersion of people and materials put into motion by the slave trade.

The torchères at Polesden Lacey reflect the long tradition of labouring Black figures who often support or perform the labour of functional decorative objects. The female pair were likely intended to support candles, candelabra or serve food. They were composed to be displayed as a pair flanking a doorway or another piece of furniture. The turbaned figures are dressed in servant's attire that is in keeping with depictions of Black servants in Orientalist art, popular in the nineteenth century.

Decorative objects like the torchères are not merely benign functional objects but carry meaning and reflect the historical and political context of the power relations between the English and Africans. A representation of a liveried Black servant in an English collection will necessarily point to England's role in the slave trade and the colonial project even if that was not the intent of the maker. The wealth derived from the colonial-capitalist economy that relied heavily on enslaved labour was a driving factor in the construction, renovation and decoration of many of England's estate homes from the seventeenth into the nineteenth century. Even in the age of abolition, there was a certain nostalgia for subservient Blackness that is borne out in the continued taste for these objects throughout the nineteenth century.

Questions that I ask myself

What are the implications of the interactions between the wealthy White collector and the blackamoor object that perpetually performs Black servitude in their opulent interior space?

Does ownership of an object reflect ownership of the person that the object represents?

How do we reconcile the fact that the blackamoor object depicted a Black body that was at once subjugated and feared and considered the embodiment of luxury? This uncomfortable tension has haunted these objects for centuries.

Is the sumptuous clothing of blackamoor figures a representation of their status? Or the status of their owners?

Is it better to display them or not display them?

Recommendations

I recommend that the curators display the objects in as close to their original configuration as possible. An additional element of contextualisation would be to add a candle or other object that would have been placed on the tray in its original usage. I recommend an extended content label (perhaps in a different colour) that acknowledges their troubling but ubiquitous depiction of Black servants in decorative arts and in other media. Docents and tour guides must be trained to respond to questions.

One strategy that can control the message would be to publish a short brochure with historical context that can be distributed to visitors should they ask about them. We must be able to communicate that a Black servant was as highly charged in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as they would be today. Even more so as they echoed colonial enslavement.



*A pair of torchères, nineteenth century, Italian or English school, NT 413922
© National Trust / Claire Reeves*



1.5 Ireland, Empire, and Dispossession: Lady Elizabeth Butler's *Evicted* (1890)

Emily Mark-Fitzgerald

Emily Mark-Fitzgerald reveals how Lady Elizabeth Butler's painting *Evicted* (1890) engages with personal and political issues of settler colonialism in Ireland, and explores its reception in the British art world. The painting allows us to grapple with the complex relationship between Britain and Ireland, specifically as it raises questions surrounding representations of class, privilege and suffering.

Struggles over land ownership and tenure have long dominated the fraught colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland, particularly from the late 1870s-90s during the period known as the Land Wars. Having just endured one of the worst nineteenth-century European famines during the 1840s (*An Gorta Mor* / The Great Hunger), a series of agricultural and economic crises from 1874-8 sparked a second period of land clearances and mass evictions by landlords. In response, from 1879 the Land League (under its leader Charles Stewart Parnell) organised resistance to eviction on the ground, and pushed for land tenancy rights in Parliament, aiming to achieve Home Rule for Ireland.

Central to these campaigns was public visibility. The Land League (and its successor the Irish National League) invited members of the international press to Ireland to witness the spectacle of evictions, which often took place over many days and attracted large crowds, including the victims, their supporters, and the perpetrators of eviction (landlords, land agents, local constabulary, and 'emergency men' for hire). Newspapers across Ireland, Britain, and

internationally featured lengthy accounts of these often-violent conflicts: the illustrated press commissioned large, dramatic sketches to be engraved and reproduced, and professional and amateur photographers (taking advantage of newly available 'instantaneous' photography) took eviction pictures that would later be engraved or screened via the magic lantern at political meetings around the world.

In 1888 the renowned English painter Lady Elizabeth Butler, married to the Irish military captain William Butler and resident in Delgany, Co Wicklow, personally witnessed the eviction of a woman close to nearby Glendalough. Butler's painting of the scene, entitled *Evicted* (c.1890), tackled the subject on a grander scale than had yet been attempted in fine art. Up to that point, Butler's reputation rested on her dramatic scenes of imperial warfare and sympathetic attention to the plight of individual soldiers: unusually, she had ascended the ranks of the British art establishment as a female battle painter. Here her focus was re-directed towards a different site of colonial conflict, inflected with nationalist sympathies influenced by her husband. Butler's large canvas centred on a lone female figure beside the charred and tumbled ruins of her cottage, set against a wild and romantic landscape and the retreating constabulary: in a letter to her sister Alice she described painting the ruins 'while still smelling of smoke & almost hot'.

The painting received mixed responses: some reviews praised the work for its realism and attention to political turmoil in Ireland; others declared it 'theatrical' and overwrought; whilst others complained it was an 'aggressive piece of controversy in paint'. Butler herself was appalled by a comment made by Prime Minister Lord Salisbury during the Royal Academy dinner following the painting's exhibition in 1890, recalling in her autobiography that he 'was pleased to be facetious about [it] in his speech at the banquet, remarking on the "breezy beauty" of the landscape, which almost made him wish he could take part in an eviction himself'. The painting never sold, and Butler never returned to Irish themes. Nevertheless, in many ways *Evicted* offers a unique opportunity to consider the complex and still-unfolding relationship between Ireland and the British empire; between class, privilege, and the representation of suffering; and the unsettled gaze of colonial artists and the subjects and audiences they encountered.

Additional reading

Elizabeth Butler, *An Autobiography* (London/Bombay/Sydney: Constable & Co, 1922).

Emily Mark-FitzGerald, 'The Persistence of Vision: Picturing Eviction in the Nineteenth Century', in Brendan Rooney (ed), *Creating History: Stories of Ireland in Art*, (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland/Irish Academic Press, 2016), pp. 202-23.

Catherine Wynne, *Lady Butler: War artist and traveller, 1846–1933* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2019).

Lady Elizabeth Butler, Evicted (1890), oil on canvas, 131 x 194 cm, University College Dublin



1.6 *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854–60): Finding Faith Amidst Race in Victorian Painting

Madeline Hewitson

What new perspectives on race and empire might be opened up by research into Victorian models? Madeline Hewitson examines stories of London's nineteenth-century Jewish community to shed new light on Holman Hunt's famous orientalist painting *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple*.

William Holman Hunt's *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854–60) holds a lofty position in Pre-Raphaelite scholarship as one of Hunt's key Protestant-motivated biblical paintings and his stylistic embrace of 'on-the-ground' ethnographic research which he conducted during several visits to the Holy Land and Egypt.¹ Although the painting depicts a New Testament scene from the Gospel of Luke, it is also a depiction of Jewish worship at the ancient Second Temple in Jerusalem. However, this depiction is undeniably coloured by Hunt's partisan beliefs. The group of rabbis on the left-hand side of the painting are an anti-semitic caricature, intentionally shown by the artist to represent the backwards, idolatrous ways of the 'old' faith. Through their semitic features, which stand in stark contrast to the red-haired, blue-eyed Mother and Child, *The Finding of the Saviour* encapsulates the privileging and racialising of 'new' Christian narratives over other forms of Abrahamic monotheism.

However, at a moment when we are losing museological perspectives on Jewish history and identity in Britain, most recently with the closing of The Jewish Museum in London, is there a productive strategy for understanding Anglo-Jewish history and representations of 'Jewishness' in a

painting like *The Finding of the Saviour*?² In this brief piece, I'd like to offer a potential avenue for developing new interpretations which refocus attention on the models in the painting. This approach will reveal new stories about the Jewish community in Victorian Britain and map out a future for this historical painting's display in the modern-day museum.

As Keren Hammerschlag has noted, the Victorian Anglo-Jewish community was perceived as a religious and racial hybrid; at once, ancient and modern, Oriental and Occidental, familiar and othered.³ These unfixed categories were contested across Victorian society as Jewish people emerged as influential actors in civic institutions, cultural circles and imperial politics. The painting reflects Hunt's search, and the broader cultural compulsion, to find a Jewish 'type' that reconciled these binaries. Hunt's frustrations at finding models while painting in Palestine and Egypt is an often-cited piece of self-published lore.⁴ However, his pursuit of models in London was far more successful. Instead of using 'Jews of the soil' in Palestine, Hunt used his connections to the Anglo-Jewish community to populate his painting.⁵

A constellation of Anglo-Jewish identities appear in *The Finding of the Saviour*, from the wealthy Sephardic families of West London to working class and immigrant children of the East End. These faces reveal the unique and shifting definitions of 'Jewishness' in mid-nineteenth century London.

Mary Ada Mocatta served as the model for Mary, an invited guest rather than hired worker. She was married to Frederick David Mocatta, the scion of the bullion broker firm Mocatta and Goldsmid, who himself had helped Hunt secure male models in Jerusalem along with one of the most senior figures in Anglo-Jewry, Moses Montefiore. The Mocattas were one of the elite Sephardic Jewish families of London and although Mary was affected by rheumatism for most of her adult life, she was a philanthropist and benefactor of several major hospitals, like many others in her circle.⁶ The Mocattas were also deeply involved in the development of the Jewish Free School in Spitalfields and likely facilitated Hunt obtaining several male students to pose as the young boys stood behind the rabbis.

Amongst this group of youths but yet to be identified is John Bergheim, the son of an Anglican convert mother, as well as a 'Hungarian Israelite' who was brought to Hunt through Reverend Haim Herschell, a Jewish-born High Anglican priest who proselytised in Jewish-immigrant dense East End of London.

Clive Kennard also contends that the figure of Jesus resembles an 1859 self-portrait of Simeon Solomon, who Hunt knew during this period. Hunt was also in correspondence with Simeon Solomon's brother, Abraham Solomon for help in finding the mantle covering the torah held by the blind rabbi – two more artistic nodes in a network of Anglo-Jewish presence in *The Finding of the Saviour*.

Research into models, particularly those from minority backgrounds, has proved to be a fruitful strategy in recent exhibitions such as *The Rossettis* (Tate Britain, 2023) in order to uncover new stories and redress imbalances in collection histories. Could knowing more about Mary Ada Mocatta, John Bergheim and the Jewish Free School boys help to break the orientalist stereotypes that have permeated the Jewishness of this painting thus far?

William Holman Hunt, The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple (1854-60), oil on canvas, 141 x 85.7 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1896P80



1.7 Animal Painting and Imperial Violence: Briton Riviere, *Phoebus Apollo* (1895)

Kate Nichols

In the following text Kate Nichols offers a reading of Briton Riviere's *Phoebus Apollo* (1895), as a means to approach animal painting in light of British colonial violence and ecological destruction. Nichols emphasises that the depiction of lions in this painting (based on Riviere's encounters with them at London Zoo) is necessarily bound up with the dehumanisation of colonised peoples and extractive violence of geographical expansion in the context of empire.

Briton Riviere's 1895 painting *Phoebus Apollo* depicts the Greek god Apollo driving a chariot drawn by five lions across a Mediterranean landscape. Riviere claimed to have sketched daily at London Zoo's Lion House, and to have used these sketches as the basis for his lions on canvas. In this short essay, I ask: where did these lions come from, how did they end up in London Zoo, and what might tracing these stories reveal about the imperial power dynamics underpinning this painting?¹

In 1891, a four-month old lion cub in Limpopo (north-east South Africa), watched a man on horseback shoot at a lioness from her pack; her mother attacked the man, and he shot her dead. The cub ran at the man, and bit and scratched his arms. She hid under a bush, but eventually found herself captured and placed against her dead mother's body. Her new life began in the hunting camp of the man who had shot her mother. He fed her raw meat and she lived in a wooden cage; later he released her, but she had become dependent on him and

returned for food, which she would eat from his (scarred) hand. By 1893 she had grown too big and too predatory to remain in the camp; the man who captured her sent her by 'wagon, punt, train, and steamer' to London Zoo.² The hunter had called her 'Leona', and she took this name with her to London Zoo, where she was slated to be housed in a cage with 'The Lion of Sokoto', a young male lion from northern Nigeria, who had been given to Queen Victoria as a diplomatic gift from Sbdur Rahmn Atiku, the Sultan of Sokoto: this lion also likely features in Riviere's painting.³ Two other female lion cubs arrived in 1893, donated by Lord Delamere, a bored minor aristocrat who had gained notoriety for his hunting 'adventures' in the 1890s in Somaliland (at that time a British Protectorate). In annual expeditions from 1891-6 he apparently killed 70 lions and survived a mauling.⁴

All of these lions were infant survivors of hunting expeditions undertaken by aristocratic British men. Hunting and colonial expansion were closely connected, as John MacKenzie has explored, arguing that 'the colonial frontier was also a hunting frontier and the animal resource contributed to the expansionist urge.'⁵ Hunting also offered an opportunity to shore up (claims to) White male dominance over nature. These animals, and the people who hunted and captured them, were embroiled in British imperial expansion and military action. Lord Delamere later became a leading British colonial politician advocating White settlement in the Kenyan highlands, where he lived from 1902.⁶

Frederick Vaughan Kirby – the big game hunter who donated 'Leona' to the zoo – cut his hunting expeditions short to fight in the South African War of 1899-1901. Riviere painted lions roughly between 1872-1902. This period coincided with, and was made possible by what has become known as the 'scramble for Africa'; in an oft cited statistic, in 1870 less than 10% of the African continent was under European control; by 1914, only 10% of Africa remained independent, with the majority of this land grab taking place between 1885-1890.⁷

Tracing the histories of big cats on canvas offers one way to foreground the histories of colonisation, violence, and ecological destruction embodied in such art works. Imperial animal imagery might also be a point of departure for exploring how the violent treatment of non-human animals was inescapably bound up with the attempts to dehumanise colonised peoples. As Burton and Mawani remind us (and their book is an excellent point of departure for anyone wishing to explore imperial animal histories): 'The British Empire was entangled in animal life at every possible scale'.⁸

Briton Riviere, *Phoebus Apollo* (1895),
oil on canvas, 135.2 x 243.9 cm,
Birmingham Museums Trust 1898P62



2 Contemporary Artists' Approaches

2.1 Resonance and Reverberation in Maud Sulter's *MUSEUM*

Jennifer DeVere Brody and Deborah Cherry

***The Death of Cleopatra* (1890)
by John Collier**

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-death-of-cleopatra-90546>

Maud Sulter's *MUSEUM* (1990) comprises three large square colour photographic prints, each of which extracts and enlarges a detail from John Collier's painting, *The Death of Cleopatra* (1890, Gallery Oldham). A quotation from Gertrude Stein is affixed to each frame.

The gallery commissioned Sulter (1960-2008), a multidisciplinary Black woman artist, curator, poet and historian to create an artwork that would respond to the gallery's entire collection. Given free rein to explore the stores, she selected the pride of the gallery, Collier's massive painting measuring 3.95 x 3.15 metres (12'11" x 10'4"). Purchased from the artist in 1891, the work had returned from conservation to display in Oldham's capacious, high-ceilinged Victorian galleries. Sulter (who often wrote about herself in the third person) recounted:

*As a celebration of International Women's Day Helen Sloan at Oldham Art Gallery commissioned Maud Sulter to create a new work. She chose to critique Collier's *The Death of Cleopatra*, a key work from the gallery's collection which had been newly conserved and placed on permanent display.¹*

***MUSEUM* (1990)
by Maud Sulter**

<https://maudsulterpassion.wordpress.com/1107-2/>

Given this work's prominence of place—literally and symbolically—Sulter's decision to deconstruct its powerful centering with her own novel postcolonial approach challenged received ideas of history. Unlike Collier's singular grand narrative and Orientalist painting, Sulter's artwork is a 'minor,' disparate and collaged event, dispersed across a suite of three photographs each 76 x 76 cm. Although smaller in scale, *MUSEUM* succeeds by hacking the master narrative's superficial smoothness even to the point of including bits of unedited hair that cling to the photographic prints. Here, Sulter puts a Black female body back into the picture, so to speak. Sulter's approach seeks to re-distribute and literally reframe Victorian standards. *MUSEUM* provides a concrete example of how a contemporary artist worked with one specific Victorian art work and collection to offer new perspectives on that object. In doing so, the works become intertextually imbricated. Sharing the same museum space gives each work a new contextual relation such that Collier's work can no longer be imagined without Sulter's response.

Can women have wishes

*Sulter placed these words in a plaque on one of the frames of the *MUSEUM* series*

Sulter understood well the significance of her intervention and provided other material to make sense of her own work. For *MUSEUM*'s first exhibition in 1990 at Oldham Art Gallery, as it then was called, Sulter compiled a brochure with an artist statement, her poem 'Historical Objects' from her second collection, *Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree* (1989), and on the cover a reproduction of her photograph of *Africa* (1878), one of the statues of the six continents now located in front of Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Ever the researcher and historian, Sulter consulted many sources and provided a reading list of writings by Gertrude Stein, Audre Lorde's essay, 'Uses of the erotic: the erotic as power' (*Sister Outsider*, 1984), and feminist studies on pornography. For the installation she created a soundscape that reiterated as an incantation one of her chosen quotations from Gertrude Stein, 'Can women have wishes', voiced over tracks from Ali Hassan Kuban's *From Nubia to Cairo*, the Nubian musician's vinyl album released by world music label, Piranha in 1989.²

In the brochure Sulter states *MUSEUM* 'creates an altered reading of notions of the great painting'. She continues, slyly mocking the Victorian painter,

*A great painting
of a great subject
of a great moment
of European History*

*The shift from East
to West
Black
to White
Power to
Powerlessness*

In these short phrases Sulter re-presents her critical reading of Collier's version of Cleopatra's herstory.

Zabat, commissioned by Jill Morgan at nearby Rochdale Art Gallery in 1989 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of photography, portrayed contemporary Black women creatives as ancient Muses. *MUSEUM* equally deploys colour photography on a grand scale: to cut up the great White patriarchal painting as a means of cutting it down to size; of slashing through its privileged presumptions and transmogrifying it, breaking it so that it 'no-longer no more'³ repeats the pornographic spectacle of a dead Black queen and her attendants.

Rather than simply invert a binary system of power, Sulter refuses to reimagine this queen whose death has been fantasised by so many artists and writers. Helen Sloan recollected speculation that the artist might 'dress up as Cleopatra'.⁴ Sulter countered that:

*In expressing the fracture of the expected
reading of a multiple greatness the artist seeks
to allow the viewer the space to negotiate the
terrain. Reinvest terms with another meaning,
resonance, reverberation.*⁵

Sulter's prescient work shifts our perspective by reviewing how we witness one of the most over-represented narratives in Western art. The 'Death of Cleopatra' is a generic title found throughout so many museums that identify Black female figures only in fragments that occlude more than they reveal. As a remedy, Sulter samples Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1927), attaching to each frame a metal plaque engraved with a unique fragment from Stein's prose-poem to 'signify' on the heteropatriarchal language that distorts such Saintly subjects. Sulter's 'cut and mix' produces a queer work of art that juxtaposes temporalities, races and genres in making something new. The discontinuous Stein quotations do not serve as appropriate titles as much as bring into focus the arbitrary protocols of museum display that so frequently have mislabelled the Black

women in their midst. Robin Coste Lewis's 2015 collection of poems *Voyage of the Sable Venus* does something similar with its use of found poetry in the catalogue listings and titles of so many museum collections.

More importantly, Sulter's intervention in the museum with *MUSEUM* (and the title is telling) goes well beyond noting the Orientalism evident in Collier's work through its shattering of the framing of Oldham itself. Sulter's aesthetic approach to the painting performed a theoretical intervention that did more than replace the maker (White male subject with Black queer woman) but significantly the medium (photography, fragment, poetry) as well. By titling the piece, *MUSEUM*, Sulter implicated the entire practice of elevating art via its 'museumification' and placement in the Gallery.

The artist's address to the representation of Black women in art and museums underpinned her creative practice:

*This whole notion of the disappeared, I think, is something that runs through my work. I'm very interested in absence and presence in the way that particularly black women's experience and black women's contribution to culture is so often erased and marginalised. So that it's important for me as an individual, and obviously as a black woman artist, to put black women back in the centre of the frame - both literally within the photographic image, but also within the cultural institutions where our work operates.*⁶


The museum haunts Sulter's practice. In 1987 Sulter and Lubaina Himid investigated the historical collections at Rochdale, producing a display and brochure about the portrayal of Black people in western art, their marginalisation and over-painting.⁷ *MUSEUM* declares Sulter's long-standing interrogation of art collections, their classifications and taxonomies. Her deep knowledge of the art of the past, her engagement with historical representation, and her challenges to art institutions run

through the reprises of *Zabat and Hysteria* (1991) to her reflections on African art in *Paris Noir* (1990), *Fetish* (1992) and *Syracas* (1994).

MUSEUM shatters Collier's over-sized painting into three fragments, all from its lower half; Sulter's slicing exposes and critiques its 'necrophilia, racism and overt sexism'.⁸ The black frames sever the parts, destroying the over-familiar story. Produced at the height of British imperialism during a period of rapid British colonial expansion across the continent of Africa, Collier's fashionable Egyptology and his decorative Orientalism displace and deny the violence and brutality of that enactment, situating it on the dead bodies of the queen and her attendants. Sulter's extraction estranges: which figure is Cleopatra is not disclosed. *MUSEUM* dismisses the grandiose setting with its towering columns and massive statuary and excludes many of the exoticizing accessories. Sulter bleaches colour, intensifying Collier's insistence on the Egyptian queen as White. She dissolves painterly detail into soft focus photography, pulling and stretching, blurring and distancing. Photographing the series in 2023, artist Morwenna Kearsley commented on how Sulter's photographic surfaces and techniques shape the spectator's encounter:

*I could see some beautiful wee dust spots and hairs that I recognise from years of printing my own work ... Small hairs love to cling to negatives and, once enlarged, are visible. If this is what they are, I so appreciate that Sulter left them in and didn't retouch the print. To me, this creates a jolt, a recognition on the part of the spectator that we are looking at an object (the print). It makes the photograph visible and by extension, the act of looking.*⁹

Sulter stated passionately in 1991: 'the root of classical history lies in Egypt — part of our misunderstanding, part of our lack of a deeper reading of histories ... has been



the writing-out of the black contribution to history.¹⁰ Sulter's early intervention in this history provides a cogent and clever response to the entire enterprise of the museum. She was in the vanguard of this on-going project. Oldham Art Gallery was one of many public art museums established across North-west England in the later nineteenth-century which are now examining their histories and reconfiguring their collections. Founded in 1883 Oldham was supported by local industrialist Charles Lees whose wealth came from textile manufacture reliant on raw cotton grown in the slavery states of the American South.¹¹ Sulter's choice of title for a series made specifically for Oldham signals her desire to take on the museum as a cultural institution that is complicit with colonial structures of domination and disappearance.

The metal plaques mimic informational labels that once graced ornate museum frames. Discontinuous, short phrases sliced from Stein's text make no sense, offer no explanations. They are all rendered without punctuation, making reading them ambiguous. There is no question mark on 'Can women have wishes'. 'Which is a fact' could be read as a statement or an interrogatory. 'One two three Saints' with its numbers aligned sequentially may be a declaration of 'addition', a spell, a description. These atemporal fragments do not serve as appropriate titles for the artworks as much as bring into focus the arbitrary protocols of museum display that so frequently have mislabelled the Black women in their midst (again, see Coste Lewis). Introducing an iconic moment in cultural history, Sulter casts Black history across centuries and geographies. Stein's text became the libretto for an opera with music by Virgil Thomson, first performed in 1934 with a Black cast, and a Black choral director, Eva Jessye, and her choir. Sulter's quotations acknowledge

the inspiration of Stein's variation, repetition, fragmentation, evident in her own writing as well as the inspiration of Stein's radical, queer, Parisian modernism. Sulter's 1990 text concludes:

*The sheen of the clean. Refreshed layers of paint over canvas. Creating a re-imagining of this representation. Figures prefigured by notions of necrophilia, racism and overt sexism. Expressed in the sexualisation of death. Of a moment in her story. Of a black queen. In a black country. Of a moment in her story. Of a black queen. In a black country.*¹²

Like Stein, she repeats what is central as a mantra, recalibrating the long 'debate' about Cleopatra's racial origins that coloured the queen's depiction on coins, statues, paintings, and numerous other portrayals.

Sulter deploys the Black aesthetic strategy of repetition with difference as a means of undermining the political authority of and in museums. She proceeds not through the more familiar strategies of re-interpretation or re-curating. Rather than affirming the authority of the institution to renegotiate its collections, Sulter assigns responsibility to its visitors, 'allow[ing] the viewer the space to negotiate the terrain'. She gifts resonance and reverberation, but declines explanation. As she once declared, 'If you don't know, why should I tell you'.¹³ She resists definitive labelling and attacks the very premise of what it means to display 'difference'. She refuses to reveal or merely replace White-appearing objects with Black ones and instead, cuts through to the heart of the matter which questions how we come to view and value A (and resolutely not THE) Black story. With *MUSEUM*, Sulter reiterates and thereby reinstates, momentarily in (the) museum, the power of this 'black queen' who ruled a 'black country.'

2.2 Contemporary artists' responses to nineteenth-century art, design and Empire. Event recording and key quotations.



WATCH
youtu.be/f3ezO2ztbHc



How are contemporary artists of colour engaging with nineteenth-century art, design and empire in their practice? What are the challenges, limits and potential of displaying contemporary artists' work to challenge racism and colonial violence in historic collections?

This research group event held in May 2021 featured presentations by artists Sunil Gupta, Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński, Farwa Moledina and Bharti Parmar, with discussion chaired by Dr Anna Arabindan-Kesson. The event recording is available via the QR code above, and some key quotations are set out here to guide listening.

Bharti Parmar

The text [of my work *Widow's Weeds*] comprises 38 alphabetically arranged names of mourning fabrics contextualised by their geographical, historical, and etymological roots. All crafts and trades have their own vocabularies. Many of my sources derived from William Beck's *Draper's Dictionary* of 1886 and Henry Yule's *Indian colloquial dictionary* Hobson-Jobson of the same year. This work has revealed intriguing cultural borrowings, roots, and philological connections between word and thing.

Sunil Gupta

[Between around 2005 and 2008] I found myself at this great sea change moment... where a new generation of young Indians was no longer willing to put up with the hypocrisies and the conservatism and the Victorian morality of their parents and the generations before. And homosexuality, which had remained undercover and very unspoken in Indian society and in the press, suddenly was being discussed, and this generation wanted to be free, and they wanted to be free now.

...when I was back in London on a visit and I was wandering around the Tate Britain and wandered into the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition, I thought there was a certain kind of similarity in the atmosphere in those paintings to what I thought I was seeing in Delhi. And so I got myself a catalogue [and] went back home; I had the opportunity, the privilege, I guess, of having a studio where I lived in Delhi and I had a kind of cast of people, who were the young activists that I'd been working with, who began to model for me and then I began to make photographic approximations of some of the paintings

[in *The New Pre-Raphaelites*] I was really substituting the heteronormative couples in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings with same-sex pairings and, of course, with Indian characters, and presenting them in ways that perhaps they hadn't been seen too much in this fashion in Delhi and Bombay.

...the thing that really struck me is that the Pre-Raphaelites, which are a very British set of paintings, seem to have gathered themselves a kind of currency in India – a certain kind of familiarity; not literally because I don't think many people in my audience have seen the real paintings, because many of them haven't left India; but it's just the way that imagery perhaps circulates in culture and leaves an imprint, maybe through the kind of very anglicised education that Indians have or something, but it certainly seems to have struck a nerve over there.

Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński

I looked at archives as places to turn to with questions and I expected to get answers there. But my repeated dissatisfaction with what I encountered or my unfulfilled desire for the voices of the people that I cared about, the ones that had motivated me to go after specific issues, is what made me start to think differently of archives.

The voids [in the archive], to me, are not void, but ways to centre the what if, or the what could have been

Part of my repeated returns to the archive or ethnographic museum is due to wanting to understand or to grasp the violence that is at the heart of these spaces. I want to get to terms with repeatedly experiencing what some might consider past, the residues of a past that to some of us is very present and keeps on popping up in the everyday in the form of discrimination, exoticisation, repeated otherisation.

The archive, the museum, is a very specific time space marked by a specific understanding of time, built upon power structures that made it possible for these spaces to come into being. In my practice, this is the place from where I start working, a methodology of hunting which aims at facing the violence that structures and orchestrates. I closely follow and shadow the ethnographer, the missionary, the traveller, the researcher and corner them until what I'm looking for evolves clearly before my eyes. And then, ***how to represent the violence one encounters? How to represent narratives and vulnerable lives of those whose mistreatments kind of suck them into the archive, the museum? What do I share, what or whom do I want to spare from a renewed display just for the sake of it? How do I orchestrate possible ways of looking?***

I realised that what haunted me was not the violence that was pictured on the photograph but the ways in which this violence has outlived colonialism as an event. The fact that I'm still haunted by events that have taken place in a far different time space than the one I inhabit, again points to an ongoing past. ***This is the coloniality of the everyday, and seen in this way encountering archives is not only about the past, but very much about the present and future.***

Again, the archive is a very specific time space. ***One question I often ask myself is why archives and museums are so quiet. With all these his/herstories that are caged within the drawers and shelves, these places should be incredibly loud and, mind you, this is not a pleasant sound, it is a cacophony of voices instead.***

And, as I enter the archive with a renewed understanding that ***past, present, future are not these neatly divided segments that we were made to believe in, and that the possibility of getting over and done with might not even be available***, I commit to staying as Christina Sharpe urges us to do, in the position of the wake, a position of deep hurts and of deep knowledge, thereby ***insisting on the ability of Black people to not only live, and I want to add, create, write, and practice, in subjection and as the subjected, but also, and this is from a quote from Robyn Maynard, to maintain impossible desires of freedom***, and this is what makes me come back to these places.

Farwa Moledina

I use patterns and textile to directly respond to Orientalist artefacts by using elements of existing artefacts within the patterns I make. And I always refer to Islamic design principles when making my patterns.

Central to the success of the Orientalist movement was the bastardisation of inherently Islamic iconography and the Muslim female form. And so responding to and re-appropriating Orientalist art is an inherently decolonial practice.

Not Your Fantasy is composed of a Muslim woman clad in white set within a white background. The lack of colour is crucial as it negates all exotic and erotic Orientalist stereotypes.

The fabric printed on fabric results in a pale and imprecise reproduction of the original photograph. This creates notions of figuratively pale reproductions of Muslim women within Orientalist paintings. This helps to articulate my concern with the cultural construction and visual mediation of the Orient.

The phrase Not Your Fantasy is challenging and clearly directed at nineteenth-century Orientalist painters who created scenes of harems from their imagination and were fascinated by the 'otherness' of the Eastern woman. To reinforce this, the woman's gaze is challenging in opposition to the vapid expressions of women in Orientalist paintings.

[In *No one is neutral here/You must choose your part in the end* (2019)] I have attempted to negate the exotic that is often associated with the East by steering away from the elaborate mosaic tiles and domes, and the stereotypical otherness that we are often identified with.

I have also tried to put a greater emphasis on the textile over the architecture and this defies traditional art-historical hierarchies and works to reclaim and re-establish textile as an art form.

2.3 Hew Locke and Matt Smith: Commemorating and Contesting Empire with Victorian Ceramics



WATCH
youtu.be/IRwCzJFj8-0

During the second half of the nineteenth century, middle-class mantelpieces throughout Britain and the British Empire were adorned with miniature sculptures made from Parian ware, a new, industrially produced ceramic material invented in the 1840s. A large number of these statuettes commemorated imperial 'heroes' and contentious political figures. How are contemporary artists engaging with these peculiarly Victorian art works? How should museums today display celebratory images of people involved in colonial violence?

This event brought together two leading contemporary artists whose work has engaged with Victorian Parian ware ceramics to challenge ideas of reputation, mythmaking, nationhood and empire. Hew Locke is a Guyanese-British sculptor, whose work across a range of media often explores colonial histories and legacies. His Souvenir series of sculptural pieces takes original nineteenth-century Parian ware busts of British royalty and dresses them in elaborate regalia, its imagery expressive of military power and imperial conquest. Artist Matt Smith's exhibition Flux: Parian Unpacked at the Fitzwilliam Museum in 2018 explored themes of mass production, celebrity, colonialism and notions of history.

The conversation was chaired by Dr Sadiya Qureshi, Professor of Modern British History at the University of Manchester. A recording of this event is available above, and select quotations below can be used to guide viewing.



Hew Locke (HL): Parian ware busts are deeply unfashionable objects. They were created in multiples, and sold to the middle classes who could not afford marble sculptures.

The original idea was to drape this bust [of Queen Victoria] in a white transparent veil with relevant embroidery like a ghost of empire or a widow, a bit like Miss Havisham.

But this is about the burden of history and she's now covered in military badges, quite a lot of them from artillery regiments. There are also badges to do with regiments that West Indian soldiers fought in in the First and Second World War.

The decision to work with these things, and how to work with them, is tricky, because I thought, well, I could smash them up and put them back together again, but that seemed too obvious. I could cover them in diamante, that seemed too obvious; I could paint them black and dip them in paint, and that's it; so ***I was working with them as they are, and that seemed to be appropriate: to try to draw people into the beauty of what these things are, but at the same time showing the complicated mess of empire which surrounds these figures.***

What I got really interested in is the whiteness of the statues and whiteness as a political thing almost, and the way that it's about the purity of whiteness; and this comes out of the art historian Winckelmann and his obsession with whiteness, and that was leading to neoclassicism, leading to Canova and leading to the Three Graces which is now on display in

the Victoria and Albert Museum, and leading to basically, going into any museum or any display, you walk into a room of white marble trying to preserve a kind of purity of whiteness.

I have debates about, am I enhancing these people or am I criticising them? I'm still debating that myself. It's a complicated work.

On [Queen Victoria's forehead in Souvenir 9] there's the Ashanti Star medal again, on either side of this are mini Victoria Crosses and across her chest is a band with old Guyana coins, so it's a complicated thing. *It's about conquest, basically, it's about hidden histories.* I'm still working out how I feel about these things, which is a strange thing to be saying in a public talk about the work which has just been acquired [for Birmingham's collection]. *It's very complicated and very, very messy, and I think history is messier than we think.*

Matt Smith (MS): The Glynn collection of Parianware [at the Fitzwilliam Museum] is overwhelming in scope but relatively homogenous in its content. Of the 360 objects only one of them is not Caucasian.

I was interested that the Fitzwilliam has an approach to curating of mixing objects and interiors and decorative arts, and how to somehow merge these awful histories, with a country-house aesthetic. So I looked to the language of chintz, and created six wallpapers based on chintz for the octagon room at the gallery and hung them up. Each of these wallpapers centres on a British atrocity overseas and forms the background to individuals in the Glynn collection, who

were linked to those atrocities. Within the central area hundreds of the busts were placed on packing cases, both the physical and metaphorical unpacking of this new collection.

The word Mahnmal in Germany is defined as a monument to national shame, or as a warning of events that should not be allowed to happen again. And, in some ways, I see this installation in the octagon room as a Mahnmal: not to criticise or single out people for their actions, but more to try and balance the celebrated view of them from the 1850s with a more nuanced and problematic view of them from the present day.

A lot of this for me started [in Birmingham] with a Simeon Solomon painting of Bacchus that talked about his homosexuality. This was in the early 1990s, and for me, queer labelling in museums just wasn't visible at all. And one label within that museum made me feel welcome and made me feel that my life was reflected in some way by that institution. And it fundamentally shaped my thinking that actually *if I was excluded in so many ways from most museums, who else was being excluded, and what could I do from a relative position of privilege to start trying to make more people feel as though they were part of the narrative that museums were talking about?*

S Qureshi: *These conversations about exclusion can have an unbelievable effect that I think many people who have never felt excluded from museums don't understand.*

MS: *I think your point, Hew, about the contemporary implications of not dealing with empire and race in this country are huge, and there's so much work we need to do. I find it really problematic that we, in this country, find it hard to talk about historical truth without it becoming contentious. I find that really upsetting.*

HL: Chila Kumari Burman had this great piece on the front of Tate Britain over Christmas [2020], and it had one thing written on it which I always remember: 'We're here, because you were there'. So now *it's time for people to start paying attention to this history. Apart from anything else, it's interesting – it's how we are where we are. And it's problematic, and it's messy, and it's unpleasant at times, and it's difficult, but I mean, this country's dealt with endless difficult things over the years, so why not this?*

HL: *Matt's wallpaper is attractive, it's beautiful until you get close and see what's really going on – and that for me is what I'm about: making things which are attractive, and it's like fly fishing: you lure people in, 'come, come, come, come and have a look', and then you get, 'oh, that's pretty.... Oh! hang on a second, what's that?', you know – and hope that people go and look at things a bit more.*

MS: *I think that's one of the things I love most about your work Hew, that you sugar the pill so beautifully. The work operates on many different levels and gives huge visual pleasure as well as a bit of a kick up the bum. I find it very joyful.*

The histories are just so barbaric and brutal that I think that sweetness to help people, I think can be a really useful strategy.

HL: We all know what images of atrocities look like, it's just a question of how do you put things across? There are different approaches. My approach is one thing, another artist's approach may be something quite different. For me, *I can't live in pain, so that's the reason why my work works the way it does – because I can't operate in pure misery.*



Hew Locke, Souvenir 9 (Queen Victoria), 2019
Mixed media on antique Parian ware,
44 x 27 x 26 cm
Birmingham Museums Trust
Courtesy of Hew Locke; Hales Gallery, London;
and PPOW, New York. Photo by Anna Arca

2.4 Subversive stitching: nineteenth-century and contemporary samplers as document

Bharti Parmar

In this short text, the artist Bharti Parmar refers to her work *The Lord's Prayer* in relation to two embroidered samplers in the city of Birmingham's collections, managed by Birmingham Museums Trust.

Bharti Parmar is a visual artist and academic living and working in the UK and has exhibited widely for thirty years. Her interests include vernacular crafts, systems, taxonomy and how things are made, and makes work in a variety of formats ranging from print, photographic installation, sculpture to embroidery. She studied Printmaking at the Royal College of Art London and has a doctorate in fine art which examines the poetics of Victorian material culture. She is also trustee of several arts organisations and a regular speaker in the fields of material culture studies, textiles, craft, Empire and the postcolonial archive. Parmar's work stems from her life-long interest in textile history and her personal narrative as the daughter of a Gujarati Indian immigrant textile mill worker in Yorkshire. The work explored here is borne of this inquiry.

The Lord's Prayer (fig.2.3.1) has been painstakingly stitched using both the artist's and 'found' hair. This piece of work forms an ongoing reflection by the artist into the cultural importance of the sampler as a social and historical document, and the expression of sentiment in Victorian material culture.

Hair is a potent signifier; it has agency, it's a hyper-realistic portrait of the individual, a memorial which surrogates for the self. Various contemporary artists (Mona Hatoum, Zarina Bhimji, Sonia Boyce) who,

like Parmar, have undergone a diasporic experience, use hair as metonymy for addressing issues of identity and the self. As an Indian woman, the use of her own hair as sculptural material points to hair as a cultural signifier. Traditions vary according to geography, age, gender, caste and cultural practices of the Indian Subcontinent; Sikhs don't cut, Muslims cover, Hindus donate to the divine, babies may be shaved.

The sampler shows the process of its facture; it's in a bespoke frame which reveals the knots, slippages and breakages of the palimpsest reverse. It takes four years to make, it's a labour of love. It begins identifying the artist with black hair, lightening towards the end, marking her time. It is displayed in such a way that the viewer can walk around it and inspect the reverse.

In the catalogue *arttextiles3*, to accompany the exhibition of the same name, the selectors, artist Susan Hiller and cultural historian Sarat Maharaj, discuss the work in relation to Christianity, name and place.¹

2.3.1 Bharti Parmar, *The Lord's Prayer* (2000-2004), Embroidered human hair sampler on cotton in bespoke frame, private collection, USA



Embroidered samplers have had a long association with women, playing an important role in a girl's education. The sampler was a vehicle to demonstrate basic domestic skills such as sewing, but also came to represent feminine behaviour such as virtue and patience. In the example (fig.2.3.2), Mary Chamberlain from Aston School in Birmingham has embroidered an abstract geometric design surrounded with floral arrangements in a muted palette of cross stitch. We know nothing about her; her age, her feelings, her desire or apathy in doing this work – 'work' in the sense that sewing is usually referred to as work. What we can surmise is that she is very young, and what looks like exceptional dexterity to us by today's standards is probably lacking to the Victorian critical eye. There are errors in symmetry, spacing and colour matching. The base of the flower vase on the far left of the work is only half finished. In the image of reverse [fig. 2.3.3], we are privileged to see a rare view of the back which appears like an unfinished Eastern magic carpet with unreadable hieroglyphs.

In Western samplers, the stitcher usually identifies herself by her Christian name and her hometown. In *The Lord's Prayer*, the artist Bharti Parmar, clearly not a Christian name, but a Hindu one, introduces herself with the Victorianism 'Bharti Parmar is my name and England is my nation, Birmingham my dwelling place and Christ is my salvation.' replacing an English girl or woman's name, town and God with that of her own. Prayers and psalms were popular content for Victorian embroideries, as in fig. 2.3.4 by Eliza Hopkins of 1831 in which she asks Christ to be her pattern and her guide.



2.3.2 Mary Chamberlain, *Embroidered Sampler* (1857), Birmingham Museums Trust 1960M59



2.3.3 View of reverse, Mary Chamberlain, *Embroidered sampler* (1857), Birmingham Museums Trust 1960M59



2.3.4 Eliza Hopkins, *Embroidered sampler* (1831), 30.6 x 26.3 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1960M38



2.5 Museums, contemporary artists, and the ethics of care: Farwa Moledina and Emalee Beddoes in conversation



Artist Farwa Moledina and curator Emalee Beddoes have worked together since 2018. Their most recent project is *Pattern Repeat* at The Wilson, Cheltenham (18 February–17 September 2023). The following extracts are from a conversation between Farwa and Emalee, prompted by the editors' questions around ethics and care when curators work with contemporary artists.

What are the ethical questions that arise when museums bring contemporary artists to reinterpret challenging historical collections with racist or imperial imagery?

Farwa Moledina [FM]: There's a risk of it being a bit lazy. That's the easy way out. **Let's just get some person of colour in. Get them to sort it out. And it could be a bit tokenistic. But I think that if the museum genuinely wants that input, then it's a different case. I think it really depends on whether the museum is actually open to listening to that feedback. Or if they're just doing it for the sake of showing that they're doing something.**

Emalee Beddoes [EB]: **And one of the questions to ask is whether that museum works with artists from the global majority generally, or whether they only do it on projects relating to 'difficult' or racialised issues.**

Sometimes institutions deploy an artist of colour expecting them to do all the labour. And then the museum gets a pat on the back for their work.

Another one of the ethical considerations we've talked about is that **it is potentially quite traumatic. Especially if the objects are problematic in terms of their histories. If they have a violent history, if it's racist imagery. Again, it's a question of emotional labour. And it's important to acknowledge that you're asking someone to do emotional labour, and that is really particularly difficult work.**

I wonder if sometimes people don't always ask these questions. When museums or galleries do commissions, it's like 'We know an artist whose work directly relates to something like a protected characteristic or decolonising or a difficult object in the collection'; they commission an artist, and don't need to have the conversation about how that touches their experience, whether that's a difficult thing for them.

So we [The Wilson, Cheltenham] were showing *The Printed Line*, an Arts Council Collection touring exhibition, and we wanted one of the galleries to have a complementary exhibition working with an artist. True to how you work, you came up with lots of new ideas. And you created a new pattern. And we developed this into a very large solo show within a very tight timeframe. That's one of the reasons why the project has allowed us to have difficult conversations, naturally, because it's not like we were trying to deploy you as we were saying that some people do; and one of the reasons it worked so well is because we've known each other for so long.

FM: **Because if you're bringing someone in who you've never met or never spoken to one another, and don't know them, and then you're asking them to do really difficult work – which you didn't, because that wasn't what this exhibition was about, I just ended up making it challenging because that's how I work – Anyway: I think you really need to get to know the person you're working with, and know their history and their life experience, because then you can take care of them. And I think that's a really important part of decolonial work as a curator, as an artist, you take care of each other.**

EB: I'm sure there's still risk of these things, irrespective of the depth of your relationship, but because I've known you so long, and we've had so many deep conversations, I could have a loose idea that this would have been okay for you; that the artworks I showed to you would have been specifically interesting to you, and it means that there wasn't the risk there of me suddenly showing you something that, or asking you to do work, that'd be particularly difficult. And it allows you to do your best research as well.

FM: I feel like alternatively, what could happen is, you'll bring an artist from the global majority in. And they might not have an interest in this kind of work. But just because of the way they look, we sort of assume that that's what they like to do or they're interested in. And you know, there is a risk there of just sort of putting people into

a box based on who they are. And we don't have that problem because you know what I'm interested in!

EB: I wonder if we can be presumptuous as an industry, which is racist in its own way. And how often we assume artists of colour should be doing racialised work because of their identity. And people conflate identity and output. Which is really problematic, and is exemplary of people having ongoing racism that they need to address within themselves.

FM: And I think you can sometimes get stuck in doing that. Sometimes I wonder what if I did something else. But also, should I do something else? This is what's expected of me.

I've been thinking about making work about a traumatic pregnancy, motherhood, that kind of thing. But it feels so different from what I've been doing. It almost feels like something I can't do. I don't know. But at the same time, I feel that maybe that subject matter isn't 'important' enough. Do you know what I mean?

EB: I think it's very important. Subjects like motherhood have such a wide impact. It's such a shared experience. That's one of the things I like writing about your work as well, talking about how it takes on things like grief and generational learning. **You specifically do work that addresses Islamophobia and shares knowledge about Islam. But also it works so**

well for an audience that might not have seen that work before, because it's also about your auntie and the time you spent in your nan and your mom's living room with them. And these things connect across people.

FM: *And that's it. For me that's really important, making these shared connections. I think that is part and parcel of decolonising as well, because it has to be a sharing. Not just an ordering of stuff.*

EB: If we see decolonising as just taking on these specific objects and working with these specific artists, it's then really limiting. Whereas decolonising requires dismantling whole systems.

One of the interesting things about your work, and one of the reasons I think it works so well in terms of decolonising is because you sort of soak up these Orientalist paintings, or these historic objects, you soak up different parts of different cultures that that speak to your own, and redeploy them to communicate these quite large global themes, it almost rehabilitates those works that are problematic. It re-establishes them within these things that are meaningful to you. So it's like reclaiming ownership. But on those terms that are about you, and your life, and your work.

FM: Reclaiming is a really important part of my practice. Also, just to make the point that our exhibition was a really quick turnaround, and it worked because we know each other. But also because there was really fair pay. That's an important aspect of the work.

EB: I heard someone saying about budgets being a moral document. I don't know where that comes from, but it's really interesting, and that **the work needs to be well paid. First of all, because we're asking you to do something quite quickly.**

And secondly, because when you are doing difficult work I think it's important to acknowledge that it's like a higher level of work, if that makes sense, because it requires a lot more of a person.

We managed to work on this in a way that moved forward really quickly because we didn't make you do everything yourself; we had someone working on production and doing things that you would often have done yourself.

An important consideration about ethical working is thinking about how much viably can be given to the artist, how much needs to be done in-house, communicating this really well **I think with difficult work it's nice to be able to think about what responsibilities can be taken from the artist to allow you a bit more brain space.**

Because we've known each other so long, we were able to talk really openly about the realities of things, because sometimes we can't do the things we want to do; or we have to make changes. Which also meant that should something have come up that was difficult, should someone have spoken to in a way you didn't like, anything like those really hard conversations that people of colour can have to have that I wouldn't have ever had to deal with. I hope that had that come up, we could have just dealt with that without it being something you felt you couldn't tell me about.

FM: Yes, we would have.

EB: *So safeguarding, I think, is super important in the curatorial world to make sure that the artists you're working with – it's almost like you're their representative in the institution – to make sure that they feel safe and advocated for and able to be authentically themselves within the space. So that's something that I think is really important. And I think obviously, it just worked really easily because of our*

relationship. But something I can learn from and deploy in future is trying to create that safe environment for work.

FM: *Little things like having lunch together and talking about things that are not the artwork. It's important because you're getting to know each other. And you're getting to know who you're working with, and that's how you'll be able to safeguard them and care for them.*

EB: I also think that on projects like this, when the artist is working directly with a collection, we work with you closely for a big portion of weeks. It's almost like you become an extended member of staff, and to work together as staff we need to be able to relax and get to know each other. It's not just one way: it also means that museum staff are able to talk to you openly about the difficulties within museums, as there are many, many constraints we face. That's one of the things I feel is my responsibility as a curator, is to make sure that the artist feels part of the team. As an artist coming to work in a museum, what are your expectations in order to feel supported? What makes a good working relationship?

FM: *To be able to have authentic conversations, to be really honest and not worry that you might say something that might offend someone and then you're never gonna work with this institution again. That kind of thing does happen, and you do get scared that, oh, if I say this, am I shooting myself in the foot?*


But you have to also be true to yourself and ethical in yourself as well. So it's a difficult one. But **I think it's really important to be able to say 'Hey, I don't agree with this'. Or 'this is wrong', or 'what you've said is wrong', which you know, I think we really have. So it works really well for us.**

EB: *Making sure that people don't feel demanding making requests is important as a curator. And again, I imagine it's the sort of thing that institutions, art galleries and museums being historically a chapel of White privilege, I imagine it is a harder place to make those requests as a person of colour*

FM: *I sort of feel sometimes like, Oh, am I being 'difficult'?*

EB: *You should be allowed to be difficult in terms of making sure your work is advocated for. I would argue that you could be more difficult if anything.*

I was just looking at the question about responsibilities of care. We've talked a lot about this care in terms of our communication. But another thing, I think, is understanding each other's lives to a degree, like one of the things that's really important is that I understand the timelines that work for you, for your care responsibilities, and your own wellbeing. If I'm working with an artist, from scratch, someone that I barely know, I'll often try and think of the best ways to find these things out. Sometimes I've worked with accessibility riders. So asking people about their access needs. But I've also done some research, looking into how to ask people about how to manage their wellbeing in terms of emotional needs and support. I feel like as a curator, if I put that question forward, how to work best around your life practically; how to work best around maybe disability or chronic illness, or your own mental health. It feels clunky when you first do it, it feels almost awkward and personal. But if I'm the person that brings that awkward conversation to the table. It means that they're able to advocate for themselves, because they know I'm a person they could do that with.



FM: Yeah, it does. And it's worked for us. You know my timings with my daughter. I'm sure at some point we've worked into Ramadan, and you've known that – 'oh, she's fasting' – it does make things a lot easier and a lot less awkward in the long run.

EB: When we look at collections, some of the ethical questions can be about history and accuracy, balanced with emotion and opinion.

So one of the things that becomes a problem in museums, and has been everywhere recently, is the spectre of 'cancel culture'. And I think we especially struggle with working on or around the Pre-Raphaelites because people care about them really deeply. So when writing about artists like Frederick Goodall that we worked on together, if we challenge their relationship with this Orientalist subject, people that care about those works can then feel like something has been taken from them. Whereas, in my view, when we interpret in this way, we're adding something to understanding that painting.

I don't necessarily feel like our job is to pander to people. But I do feel like our job is to make sure decolonising can continue and doesn't become such a hot topic, politically, that local authorities feel they can't do it. The work we did with Frederick Goodall's painting *Bedouin Mother and Child* (1871) took a few iterations to make sure it said what we meant it to say, and your really insightful interpretation about how it does not represent an Islamic view on motherhood.

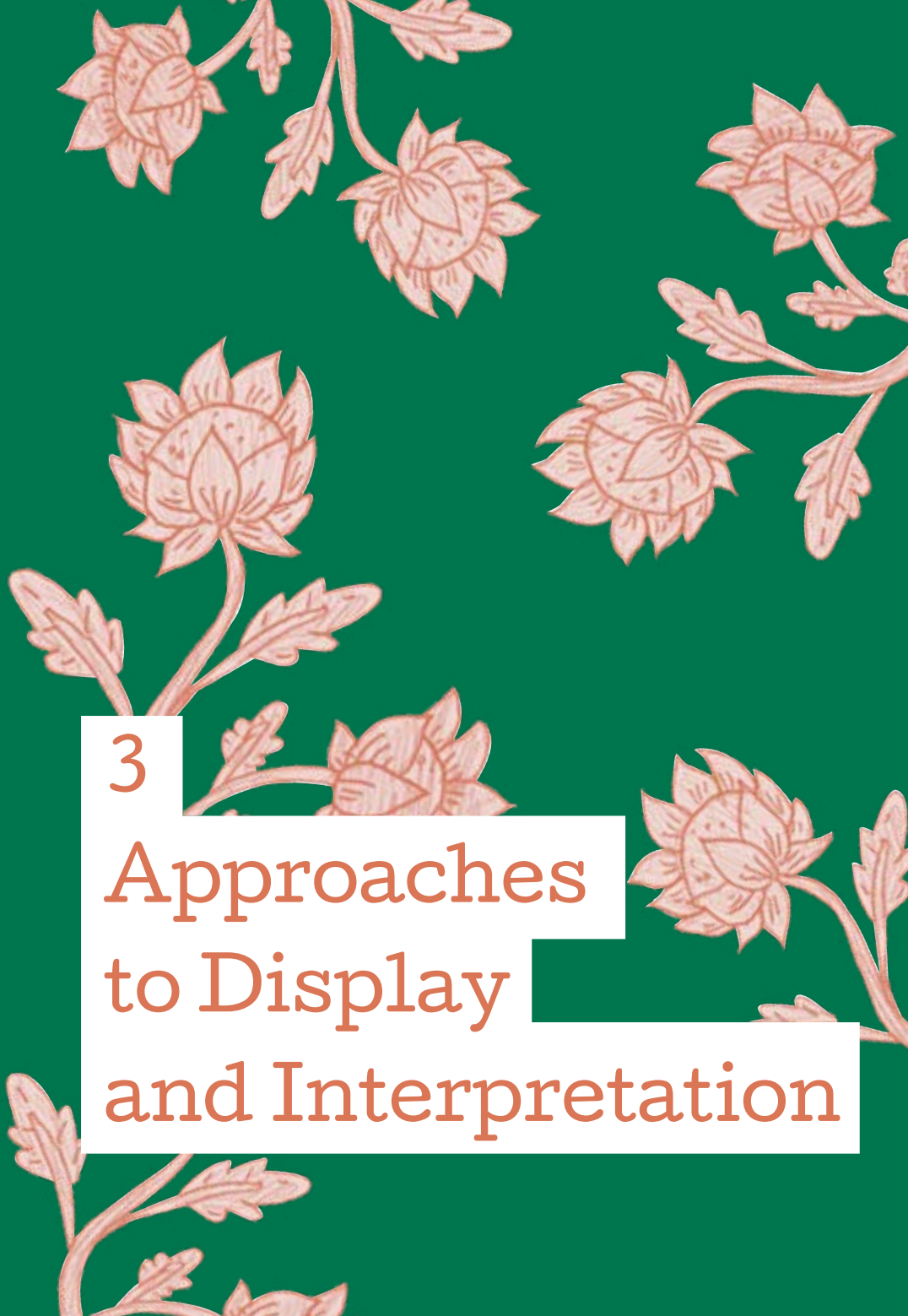
FM: And again, *I think we could have those conversations because we've had tough conversations before. So I could just say 'Emalee, that painting makes me uncomfortable.'*

EB: I feel like we've managed to create a label that is historically accurate, shows the painting's historical inaccuracy as well in its depiction of Muslim motherhood, but also allows us to decolonise in a way that is ...

FM: Not so harsh. Because possibly our first version of the label was a bit harsh and a bit emotional, which we should be able to write! We should be able to put things like that up on the wall. But again, looking at our audiences ... It's almost like slowly and steadily.

EB: I feel like sometimes these commissions people do with artists who reinterpret collections can be a bit gas-lighting, you know, like curators say 'We want you to be radical. Say what you want, do what you want'. And then that's not true. Whereas we just wanted to work together in terms of your work as an art work, and we have found an organic journey that has led us to learn a lot more about our work in the collection.

FM: It really was organic! 'Decolonising' wasn't expected of me. It sort of just happened, because that's the way I work, and that's how we think together.



3 Approaches to Display and Interpretation



3.1 Collaborative authorship and museum interpretation

Rachael Minott

In this piece, Rachael Minott reflects on the process of co-creating museum texts with partners outside the institution, and proposes some essential questions that participants should discuss and agree upon when embarking on collaborative projects.

Writing for museums brings its own unique challenges. As spaces intended for public audiences of all ages, varied interests, beliefs, lived experiences and education, how you communicate is thought of in stages, hierarchies. As spaces that also symbolise colonial legacies of domination and subjugation, hierarchies of information can be seen as the manifestation of the imbalance of power baked into the structures of museums that leave many feeling like museums are not made for them. To address this, in recent years museums have been exploring versions of interpretation that deviate from a singular institutional voice, toward a more multi-vocal approach. These have included adding quotes on gallery walls from participants, having interpretation in a child's voice, or family-friendly labels. It includes having guest curators whose perspective is championed; it includes interpretation in varied formats, written, audio, visual,

performance and communicating in multiple languages, though Britain is far behind almost all comparable nations here. And then there is co-authorship, where museum professionals work with those outside the professional framework to write something new, together.

The latter is an area of special interest to me as co-creating is a rich and complex process. To write 60–80-word interpretive texts collectively is truly a creative exercise. Working within these restrictions while understanding the museum's task to speak to a wide public is a part of the museum professionals' training, and so when opening that practice out there is tension in the role the museum representatives should play. Operating intentionally, so as not to replicate the alienating power structures of colonial and Eurocentric practices. Considerations include:

Should all collaborators divide and assign each 60–80-word label? Should the museum professionals act as editor but not author, to ensure accessibility only? Should they draft the long text where much of the collections-based expertise exists, and return to proofread to ensure meaning hasn't been misconstrued? Or else should they respond

to the story and content the co-authors wish to impart as key messages, presenting drafts that can be edited if meaning and tone are lost? Should we all edit a shared virtual document, stopping when there is consensus?

What happens when the institutional voice is abandoned and the interpretation becomes a comment on the institution itself, who will hold the responsibility for institutional reputation? What will happen when those texts are in the public sphere – who will defend them? The parameters of this work must be addressed as openly and transparently as possible from the outset, so those involved in co-authorship know what the intention of the text is. Are we disrupting, challenging, educating, are we hoping for provocation? Is this intended to be a part of reconciliation and healing, or representation and celebration?

These are key issues to be discussed, with an agreed approach determined, and with all parties entering into the co-creation agreement informed and empowered to leave if the terms change or are no-longer sustainable. It is a long journey to make the spaces we operate in more equitable, with structural change requiring radical action. For those of us who continue to operate with and in these institutions as they are being reformed, we can control our practices and the spaces and projects we design and enter. Multi-vocality is an important pursuit, and approaching this through co-authorship can be a complex task, leading to outcomes that can be radical and surprising, or comfortably close to business as usual. Decide which it is you want and why, understand what voices should be included, to author this text. Work together to understand how you want to operate, and then co-create under your collectively agreed terms and conditions.



3.2 Home Is Where The Art Is: 'Collecting Home,' a story of co-production

Alison Solomon



WATCH
youtu.be/wv7AI8MMkZE



Home Is Where The Art Is: 'Collecting Home,' a story of co-production
Image Credit: Photograph of Jennifer Palmer and Adline Palmer, participants in the Collecting Home project (2022). Image used with permission of the Collecting Home Project.

Over the past 25 years, historians have explored the various ways in which imperialism permeated life in Britain. The network event 'Empire and the Everyday Object' (May 2022) focused specifically on the connections between objects in daily use, empire, and migration. It explored how everyday objects today can be placed into dialogue with nineteenth-century collections, and asked how museums might work with community collections in recasting histories of art, design and empire.

The session began with a plenary talk by artist-documenter and storyteller Alison Solomon. Alison had just embarked upon an AIM and National Lottery Heritage funded project with the Royal Crown Derby Museum, which sought to explore who collects Royal Crown Derby porcelain, and what the connection is between such collections and our sense of home. The project's initial focus was on collecting and documenting stories from British Caribbean collectors of Royal Crown Derby. The recording can be accessed on YouTube, and you can read more about the project in the next article.

3.3 Reflections on Collecting Home: Community Engagement and New Understandings of Historic Ceramics

Alison Solomon

Derby, 2020

When Covid-19 imprisoned us at home, what I collected, how I curated it, and my Royal Crown Derby possessions, became a metaphor for resilience amidst uncertainty. As the invisible miasma lifted, stories of design, designers, manufacture, employees, product, and famous clients that featured in Royal Crown Derby Museum's permanent exhibition seemed aloof, but a photograph of employee, Dwight Morrison, highlighted the omission of my heritage of Caribbean front rooms with china mementos of HOME: migrated to and adopted.

I asked Museum Director Elizabeth Woledge whether she knew the Black Caribbean community in Derby are massive collectors of Royal Crown Derby. Her data showed Chinese, Russian, American, British and the Traveller communities were collectors. Gauntlet thrown down, the *Collecting Home* project was born, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and AIM (Association for Independent Museums).

The Process

The project started in January 2022 with several meetings to establish our collaboration limits, the timeline, and project structure. Connections were made with the target audience through word of mouth, reciprocal contacts, and *Collecting Home* project postcards, distributed and placed in Caribbean-owned organisations. BBC Radio Derby presenter Devon Daley, a former colleague, also invited me to share the project with his listeners. Press releases Elizabeth sent to the media pre-production,

quickly generated interest with BBC's Emma Snow contacting us for an interview for their social media sites. I found and established Adline and Jennifer Palmer as figureheads from the community who had authenticity, trustworthiness, and collecting relevance to preview, endorse and pioneer the developmental stages. Our unique angle, visual nature, industrial heritage, and cultural relevance, saw our interview get picked up with multiple televised airings that put *Collecting Home* into Derby's consciousness.

Royal Crown Derby, The Four Continents (1795), Royal Crown Derby Museum, used with their permission.



Thereafter momentum was sustained with several conversations with individuals and community leaders to reinforce their stories' relevance, to break down commitment barriers, and then convert people into contributors. I carefully measured and acknowledged that not everyone wanted to be contributors but would participate and support. They were included through our free guest open days, with museum tour and refreshments.

Contributors were personally invited to workshops at Royal Crown Derby or a community venue. Elizabeth and I co-partnered leading project and cohort introductions over refreshments. Contributors were permitted to handle selected pieces from the permanent collection, and then Elizabeth introduced them to 'audience-friendly' historical storytelling, for example, a World War II plate's eye witness account of surviving bombing from its perspective. Personal collecting storytelling methodology was shared through my lived experience in prose and poetry. Then we gave contributors prompts to encourage their written stories before we recorded them, individually, with possessions, within their cohorts. During recording we prompted but peers naturally contributed to each other's stories.

In October *Collecting Home* became a pop up at Derby City Lab with experimental connection with Caribbean business people's wider stories, with Richard Carruthers, Derby City Council, and reciprocating citywide knowledge.

We arranged for former employee Ina Campbell to meet with current employee Dwight Morrison for a filmed conversation about roles and memories. Ina was given a factory tour to record her recollections about her intersection between social and industrial histories, which was repeated with her showing her daughter and granddaughter her legacy and contributions

to the *Collecting Home* project. The final exhibition launched in January and concluded June 2023.

Reinterpreting the Permanent Collection

In a first to celebrate Black History Month, we programmed in two online and one celebratory events. The celebration tea brought volunteers, staff, contributors and participants together, where Elizabeth and I updated everyone about the project's successes and desires. Also in a first for the Museum we responded to two cultural pieces within the permanent collection, *The Four Continents* (1795, see image) and an unnamed piece 1760 - 1770 with the production of two filmed challenges for the Museum's YouTube site that Elizabeth posed to me as both storyteller and person of Black Caribbean heritage, to bring fresh reinterpretation from my perspective and on-the hoof. My first attempt at reinterpreting both pieces can be witnessed here.

The Four Continents (1795)

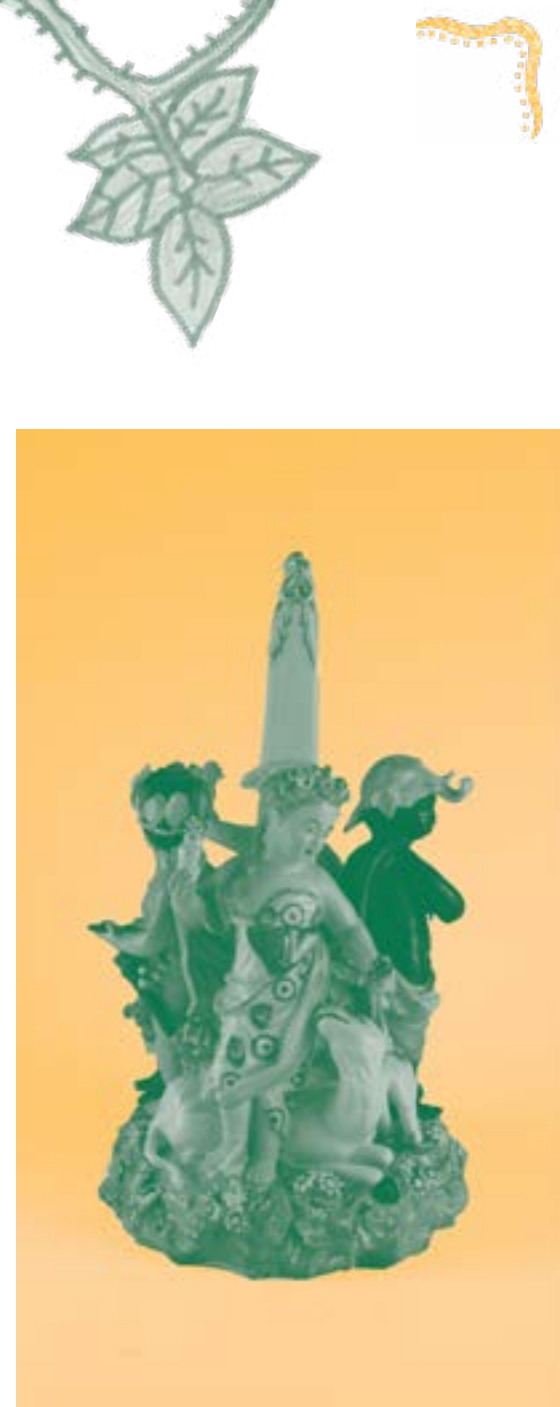
Europe shows a Queen with regalia, the horse is the strength of the British Empire and the lion emblematic of the Christian faith (Christ Jesus lion of the Tribe of Judah). Africa depicts a Tribal Chief with the intelligence, size, and strength of kings of the jungle, the lion and elephant. Asia a Maharani with their rich trade in fragrant spices, with the mighty desert camel, for Mohammed, an omen when kneeling. The Americas represents a Tribal Chief with a crocodile, a symbol of deity, and holding an anaconda showing The Amazon River's meandering, with its fabled power of bringing about youthful vigour via ancestral spirits.

Changes

On a snow-ridden 21 January, 2023, *Collecting Home*'s final temporary exhibition celebration demonstrated the impact of our project. Before this, Royal Crown Derby Museum had neither displayed participant-owned collections alongside its own collections, nor told stories beyond its own. *Collecting Home* led the museum to embrace the social, local and migratory history of Derby's Black Caribbean community.

Our strategy to combine Elizabeth's museum and my storytelling expertise enabled maximum participant engagement with the permanent collection. The project culminated in the collection of over 30 stories with over 60 participants. We interrogated the idea of historical and cultural object stories, their interpretation, and consumption. We encouraged participants' own stories through creative mentorship of knowledge based upon memories. We created a cohesive environment for collective learning, social value awareness, cultural heritage exchange, and celebration, which generated stories like *The Family Bond*, enabling familial multi-generational connections to trickle down histories of collecting and heritage. We initiated the curation of over 70 years of knowledge about organisational culture, practice, customs, skill, tools and collecting with present employee Dwight Morrison and former employee, Ina Campbell.

The community was at risk of exclusion but *Collecting Home* allowed my lived experience to bridge the gap between community, Museum and brand. It turned passive participants into confident, engaged social historians, creating emotional investment, decolonisation and place-making through increased two-way clarity that this population fits the multiplicity of British national identity.



Royal Crown Derby, *The Four Continents* (1795), Royal Crown Derby Museum, used with their permission.

3.4 What should we do with Labels?

How can museums and galleries use the limited text of gallery labels to responsibly convey the complexities and contexts of nineteenth-century artworks depicting racist, orientalist, and pro-imperial imagery?

In the research group's first events we explored ways of approaching nineteenth-century imagery that historicises it, and tells complex, nuanced stories. In this practical session (held in June 2023) we discussed how these ideas might be conveyed in the approximately 80 words usually allocated for museum labels. The following set of questions and ideas about labels emerged from our group discussions.

Interpretation
isn't neutral!

Could see labels
as storytelling
rather than just
providing 'facts': can
offer alternative
perspectives

Whose voice isn't
being heard?

Different voices
responding - other
types of creative
response, other ways
in - soundscapes?

Are labels a
detriment to the
object? Should we
just get rid of
them altogether?

Authorship: do we
add in names of
authors of labels?
Dates of labels?
Include history of
different labels?

What draws
people in?
Human stories but
also ambiguity.

Who was this image
intended for?
Who is the intended
audience now?

Different voices
responding - other
types of creative
response, other ways
in - soundscapes?

Where interpretation
is contested, who
decides upon the final
label text (especially
in co-production
processes)?

Tension between
what the author
communicates and how
the visitor receives it
emotionally

Poetic texts/creative
writing rather than
traditional labels.
Creative writing and
speculation can say
things more powerfully

Include images of
the preliminary
drawings to
present the
context

Facts are our friends
- but ideas are an
exciting prospect for
visitors too!

In some labels the
tone is very absolute:
this does not
encourage viewer to
explore. No ambiguity

Multiple labels -
curator's label,
'community' labels...
danger of hierarchy?

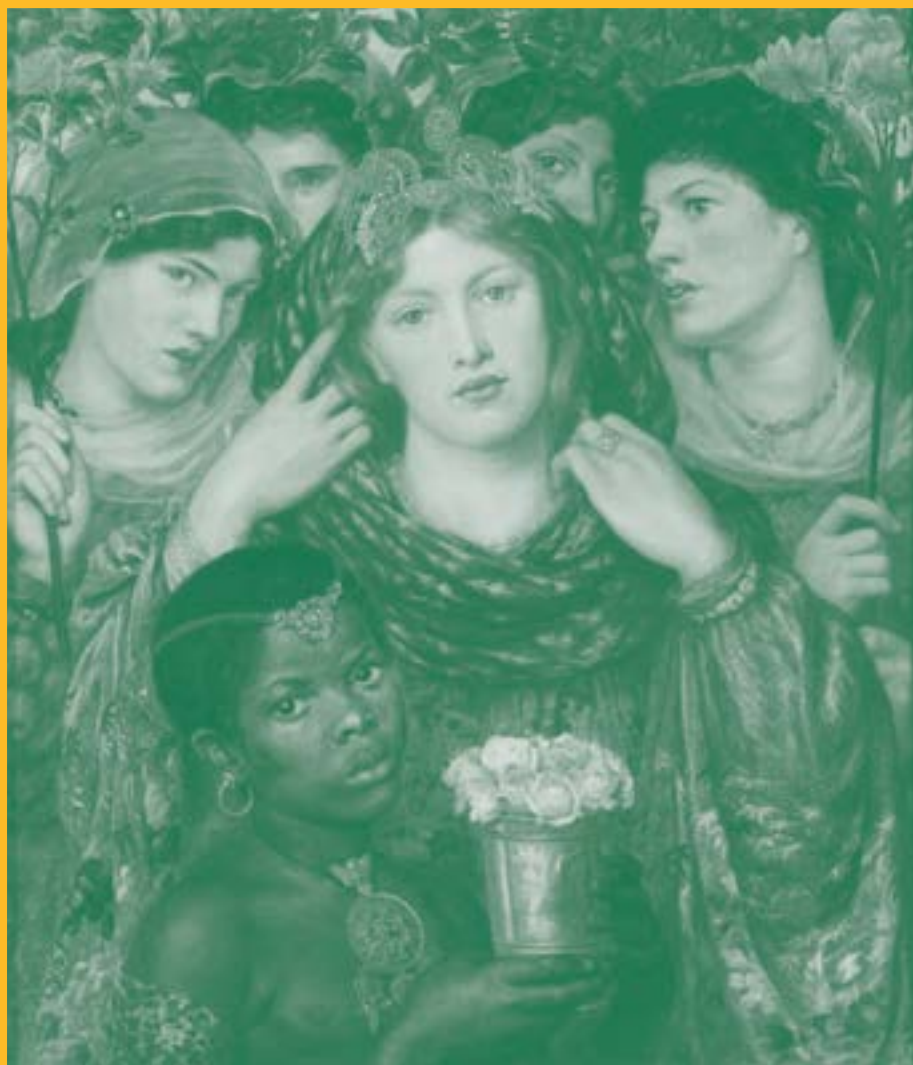
Interdisciplinary
approach to labels
- people bringing
different sets of
knowledge to a work

3.5 Exploring Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Beloved* Through Creative Writing

Chiedza Mhondoro

Chiedza Mhondoro reflects on critical fabulation as a means of engaging with Rossetti's 1865 painting *The Beloved*, and on the creative process of writing about the painting for the catalogue of the exhibition *The Rossettis* (Tate Britain, 6 April–24 September 2023).

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Beloved (The Bride)* (1865–6), oil on canvas, 82.5 x 76.2 cm, Tate



Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting *The Beloved* 1865–6 depicts the moment a fair and auburn-haired young bride is introduced to the groom, her beloved. She is the centre of the composition, luxuriously dressed and exuding a gentle sensuality that marks her as worthy of her groom's attention, and of ours the viewers at whom she is also staring directly. Four racialised women accompany her in her procession. Working-class professional women modelled for the painting. The figure on the right is drawn from the Roma model Keomi Gray Bonnet. The model behind her is Fanny Eaton, a mixed-heritage Jamaican-born former laundress. Ellen Smith, an English former housemaid, poses for the attendant left, and perhaps also for the olive-skinned figure whose face is largely obscured behind her. Marie Ford, whose biography is now lost, poses for the bride.

The foreground figure in the painting is an androgynous-looking boy of African descent. The boy's difference in status is evident: he is unclothed, without a veil, the sole occupant of the bottom half of the composition, and pre-pubescent, perhaps nine or ten years old. He is the only Black figure ever painted in oils by Rossetti throughout his career. The artist described him as a 'pure black' boy who could accentuate the colour values in the jewellery and robes of the women and highlight the beauty of the 'irresistible' White bride.¹

Little is known about this child, beyond the fact that he was in the charge of a 'master' staying at a London hotel and that he visited the studio of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to sit for the painting in the spring of 1865.² There are no archival records of the boy's

life experiences. No biography, not even a name. What was his experience of being sent to a stranger's house to sit, partially undressed, for a painting? Did he understand the painting's narrative in which he was to be included? Could such a young child with a master ever consent to his likeness existing perpetually in the context of Rossetti's racialised vision?

To understand the experience of the child within the social and racial schemas of Rossetti's time, I turned to fiction writing, or *critical fabulation*.³ I imagined the boy's stream of consciousness as he sat for Rossetti in a 600-word fictitious text that introduced the exhibition catalogue essay 'Sensitivity and Possibility: Reading Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Beloved* Through Fiction'. Given that there is no first-hand account of the child's experience, nor many first-hand accounts of life as a Black individual in Victorian England, I rearranged the few historical mentions of the child with fragments from Rossetti's letters and his aunt's diary to imagine the sitting.

I imagined the instructions he would have been given by his *master* and by Rossetti. I also imagined his encounter with the props and paintings in Rossetti's studio, what drove him to cry as Rossetti's aunt remarked, and how the painter could have calmed him down. Creative writing as an interpretative tool provided a multi-dimensional perspective more considerate of the position of a child who had been deemed as inferior. Fiction can never restore what has been lost to or suppressed from history, nor can it be deemed truer than what an artist paints. It is, however, an attempt at sensitivity and the exploration of what might have been.

3.6 The Beloved (Black 'Boy')

Janine Francois

Janine Francois writes here in dialogue with Chiedza Mhondoro's exploration in the previous article of critical fabulation as a means of engaging with Rossetti's 1865 painting *The Beloved*. Their personal reflections suggest ways in which the Black presence in historic art works can be alive to viewers today: as Janine observed, the fact that two Black women have chosen to write about this painting for the resource pack is perhaps testimony to the persistent presence of this child, almost 160 years after they were painted.

I first came across the young child on one of my many walks-through at Tate Britain about 5.5 years ago. This normally involves observing what is happening, who is present, and how my Black women can create an affect in the gallery space. Considering the numerous times I have practised these walks, forming part of my auto-ethnographic research for my PhD at Tate Britain, I was clearly ready to (?)¹ on this particular walk and the many others. I remember being taken in by their eyes; there was a deep

3.6.2 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Study of a Boy for 'The Beloved'* (1865), black chalk over pencil on paper, 49.5 x 37.4 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust



3.6.1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Study of a Boy for 'The Beloved'* (1865), black chalk over pencil on paper, 49.5 x 37.4 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1904P473



pensive innocence to them, but also an uncertainty about his place in the world. Looking at them reminded me of my then pre-teen nephew and the liminal space Black boys occupy, when they find out society deems them a threat. So, I adopted them and promised I would visit whenever I was onsite, to at the very least be one Black visitor that saw him, and not his Blackness used to amplify the white bodies that surrounded him. I wanted to know more about this child, how did they end up in London, in Rossetti's studio, what was their story and their name.

We do not know much about the young child, and their status is questionable: was he a servant or was he enslaved? His 'master'

was American, and this raises even more questions about the true status of this child. The painting was produced 30 years after slavery was abolished in the Caribbean and at around the time slavery became abolished in the United States of America. When Victoria and Kate (from Race, Empire and the Pre-Raphaelites) arranged an archival visit to see the sketches for his depiction, I was overcome with emotion. I wanted to burst into tears, especially when I learnt that when modelling, the child was in deep distress and that Rossetti described him as 'crying and calling out for his mother.'

This dramatically changed how I saw them; all this time I've been looking at a traumatised child. How cruel it must have been for them, to engage in something so unfamiliar and strange? On top of what they had to already endure at such a young age, when they should be out playing with their friends! Did they even have friends? Did they ever get a chance to play? The cruelty does not even end there, they are erased from the 1970s ceramic tile mural of the painting as you exit Pimlico station.

3.6.3 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Study of a Girl for 'The Beloved'* (1865), black chalk over pencil on paper, 43.2 x 35.6 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1904P474



Viewing the various depictions of the other young Black children that Rossetti drew for this piece, was extremely overwhelming. These sketches felt so life-like, more real and intimate than photographs; it was truly a moment of the past confronting the present and sketches were reminders of these children's existences. My ambiguity about the young child's gender was a rightful hunch: the final depiction encompassed the likeliness of both female and male subjects. The sketch which directly informed the final depiction, has much softer, more feminine features than those in the drawing of the same child on the back of the sheet. This reminded me of what my Black transwoman friend shared about growing up, and how she saw a version of herself in this child.

This sharing has also changed how I viewed the child as not being cis-gendered. So now I might have a niece, nephew, or a nibling.²² Either way, I will commit to my promise of regular visits, long-after my PhD is due.

3.6.4 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Study of a Girl for 'The Beloved'* (1865), black chalk over pencil on paper, 50.9 x 38 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust 1904P472



Introduction

Kate Nichols, Victoria Osborne and Sabrina Rahman

¹ Eve Tuck and Y. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor", *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1.1, 2012, 1-40.

² Throughout the resources pack we have capitalised Black as a marker of a specific culture and identity (unless in a quotation, where we have left it as it originally was). The debate over whether or not to capitalise White is ongoing. We have chosen to capitalise White in order to draw attention to it: following Eve Ewing, who writes: 'As long as White people do not ever have to interrogate what Whiteness is, where it comes from, how it operates, or what it does, they can maintain the fiction that race is other people's problem, that they are mere observers in a centuries-long stage play in which they have, in fact, been the producers, directors, and central actors.' Eve Ewing, 'I'm a Black Scholar who studies race. Here's why I capitalize "White"', Medium (2 July 2020): <https://zora.medium.com/im-a-black-scholar-who-studies-race-here-s-why-i-capitalize-white-f94883aa2dd3>

³ Hannah Atkinson, Suzanne Bardgett, Adam Budd, Margot Finn, Christopher Kissane, Sadiya Qureshi, Jonathan Saha, John Siblon and Sujit Sivasundaram, *Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History: A Report and Resource for Change* (London, 2018).

⁴ For a more recent example, see Sonia Boyce's 2018 *Six Acts*, an intervention at Manchester Art Gallery. This is discussed in more detail here: Dorothy Price (2019), 'Art History at the Barricades', *Art History*, 42: 8-15: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12440>

⁵ *Cotton: Labour Land and Body*, held at Crafts Council, 21 September 2022-4 March 2023. See <https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/whats-on/cotton>

1.2 Global Mining Industries and Elkington's 1851 Commemorative Wares Caitlin Beach

¹ For further, see William H. Sewell, Jr., 'Visions of Labour: Illustrations of the Mechanical Arts Before, In, and After Diderot's Encyclopédie', in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, ed. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp (Cornell University Press, 1986), 258-286.

² For further, see especially Rose Marie San Juan, 'The Transformation of the Río de la Plata and Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers in Rome*', *Representations* 118, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 72-102.

³ 'Prospectus of the River Plate Steam Navigation Company,' Elkington and Company Records, AAD/1979/3/1/1, 251, Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum (hereafter cited as AAD, V&A).

⁴ Henry Elkington to River Plate Agency, 16 June 1845, Elkington and Company Records, AAD/1979/3/1/1, 245, AAD, V&A.

⁵ Notes on Elkington's sourcing of silver from Real del Monte appears in 'Material concerning works of art and other miscellaneous papers,' Elkington and Company Records, AAD/1979/3/1/8, 279, AAD, V&A.

⁶ See Alistair Grant and Angus Patterson, *The Museum and the Factory: The V&A, Elkington, and the Electrical Revolution* (London: Lund Humphries in association with V&A Publishing, 2018).

1.3 Quintessentially English? Rethinking William Morris' Textile History Gursimran Oberoi

¹ V. Davis, 'William Morris and Indigo Discharge Printing', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, 11.3 (1995), 8-17

² Morris did not leave a comprehensive account of his critique against the Raj or imperialism. I am indebted to Sarah Mead Leonard for bringing my attention to this subject. For a discussion on his socialist and anti-colonial perspectives see P. H. Hoffenberg, 'Socialist and Orientalist? William Morris and the "Eastern" Question of Indian Art', *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal*, 10 (2004), 10-30.

³ W. Morris, *The Merton Abbey Dye Book* (1882-1891). William Morris Gallery Archive GB 365 LPRA/42, Waltham Forest; W. Morris, 'Dyeing as an Art', *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 19.6 (1892), 217-18.

⁴ P. Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work and Friends* (New York: McCraw Hill, 1967), p. 159.

⁵ S. M. Leonard, 'Morris's Imperial and Environmental Materials: A Study in Indigo', College Art Association Annual Conference. Held online, 13 February 2021.

⁶ For further information about the production process, see Davis, 'William Morris and Indigo Discharge Printing'.

⁷ E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 241.

⁸ I am indebted to Sarah Mead Leonard for bringing my attention to this subject.

⁹ Ibid.

1.4 Figuring Blackness: The Ornamental Blackamoor Adrienne L. Childs

Adrienne L. Childs, 'A Blackamoor's Progress: The Ornamental Black Body in European Furniture', in Awam Amkpa (ed.), *Resignifications: European Blackamoors, Africana Readings* (Postcard, Rome, 2016)

Adrienne L. Childs, 'Sugarboxes and Blackamoors: Ornamental Blackness in Early Meissen Porcelain', in Michael Yonan and Alden Cavanaugh (eds.), *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Routledge, 2010)

Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (eds.) *Slavery and the British Country House* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013) <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/slavery-and-british-country-house>

Hannah Lee, 'Serving as Ornament: The Representation of African People in Early Modern British Interiors and Gardens', *British Art Studies*, Issue 21 (2021) <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-21/hlee>

Catalogue entry, 'A pair of torchères', National Trust Collections, <https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/413922>

1.6 The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple (1854-60): Finding Faith Amidst Race in Victorian Painting Madeline Hewitson

¹ The scholarship on this painting is extensive. For a complete catalogue entry see Judith Bronkhurst *William Holman Hunt: a catalogue raisonné*. (New Haven and London, 2006), pp. 173-177.

² David Rose, 'London's Jewish Museum to close indefinitely amid massive losses' *The Jewish Chronicle* (1 June 2023),

accessed 18 July 2023, <https://www.thejc.com/news/news/london's-jewish-museum-to-close-indefinitely-amid-massive-losses-12eGNJ2WJS316K7oB4FWtU>.

³Keren Hammerschlag 'Christ's Racial Origins: Finding the Jewish Race in Victorian History Painting' *The Art Bulletin* 103 (2021), p. 66.

⁴Hunt's autobiography, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (London: Macmillan, 1905) contains several anecdotes about the struggle to obtain local models for *The Afterglow in Egypt*, *The Lantern Maker's Courtship* and *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple*.

⁵Frederic George Stephens, *William Holman Hunt and his works* (London, Nisbet, 1860), p. 61.

⁶Mary died just a few weeks after Frederick and in her will, left money to University College London Hospital, the Jews' Infant School, Guy's Hospital, the Metropolitan Nursing Association and West London Synagogue. Anon. 'Bequests to Charities' *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (28 June 1905), p. 6.

1.7 Animal Painting and Imperial Violence: Briton Riviere, Phoebeus Apollo (1895) Kate Nichols

¹My starting point for tracing these biographies has been London Zoo's archives. The 'Daily Occurrences' book lists animals arriving, and often some details about the donors of animals (from whose human biographies I have been able to uncover further information), and the vessels on which the animals travelled to London. The regularly produced *Lists of Vertebrated Animals Living in the Zoological Gardens* have also been a useful means of calibrating which animals were still alive and present. The press, especially the *Illustrated London News*, also widely documented new arrivals at the Zoo. For an exploration of the possibility of writing animal biographies (and on language use and phrasing), see Eric Baratay, *Animal*

Biographies. Toward a History of Individuals, translated by Lindsay Turner (Athens GA, 2022).

²This is the account given in Frederick Vaughan Kirby, *In Haunts of Wild Game. A Hunter-Naturalist's Wanderings from Kahlamba to Libombo* (London, 1896), pp. 452-7.

³Phil Robinson, 'The Zoo Revisited', *English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1893, p.297.

⁴According to Rowland Ward, *A Naturalist's Life Study in the Art of Taxidermy* (London, 1913), p.85.

⁵John M. Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature. Hunting, Conservation, and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988), p.7.

⁶A. Clayton, 'Cholmondeley, Hugh, third Baron Delamere (1870-1931), settler in Kenya and Politician, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2011), Retrieved 3 July 2023, from <https://www-oxforddnb-com.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32405>.

⁷See further M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 3rd edition (Routledge, 2010).

⁸Antoinette Burton and Renisa Mawani (eds), *Animalia: An Anti-Imperial Bestiary for Our Times* (Durham NC and London, 2020), p. 1.

2.1 Resonance and Reverberation in Maud Sulter's MUSEUM Jennifer DeVere Brody and Deborah Cherry

¹Maud Sulter, *Hysteria: Maud Sulter Photoworks*, exhibition brochure, Royal Festival Hall, London, 1992. Helen Sloan indicated Sulter was given access to the stores: Zoom interview with Helen Sloan, 28 July 2023. Deborah Best initiated the project: Zoom interview with Deborah Best, 29 August 2023.

²Lubaina Himid, 'A brief introduction to the magical world of Maud Sulter's photoworks' in *Maud Sulter: Syrcas*, 1994, 31. Val Williams, 'Women Still Focusing', *Creative Camera*, October-November 1990, pp. 46-47. MUSEUM brochure, 1990.

³Maud Sulter, 'Historical Objects', in *Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree* (Urban Fox, 1989).

⁴Zoom Interview with Helen Sloan, 28 July 2023

⁵MUSEUM brochure, 1990 (authors' emphasis).

⁶Maud Sulter in conversation with Mark Haworth-Booth, Victoria and Albert Museum archives.

⁷Lubaina Himid and Maud Sulter, *New Robes for MaShulan* (Rochdale, 1987). 'People seldom know what is in the vaults of a public collection and what is put on the walls is decided by the people who run the gallery', p. 1. *Hysteria was produced and exhibited at Tate Liverpool alongside Sulter's curation of women artists in Tate collections, Echo: Works by Women Artists, 1850-1940, Tate 1991.*

⁸MUSEUM brochure, 1990.

⁹Email from Morwenna Kearsley, 3 August 2023.

¹⁰Maud Sulter in conversation with Mark Haworth-Booth, 1991, reprinted in Maud Sulter: *Passion*, 2015, p. 113.

¹¹Lees donated money and artworks to Oldham Art Gallery and was active in the cultural management of North-west arts institutions. <http://revealinghistories.org.uk/partners/gallery-oldham.html>

¹²MUSEUM brochure, 1990.

¹³Maud Sulter, 'Finis', *Zabat*, artist's book (Urban Fox Press, 1989), unpaginated.

2.4 Subversive stitching: nineteenth-century and contemporary samplers as document Bharti Parmar

¹*arttextiles3, The Third Major Survey of British Artists working with Textiles*, exhibition catalogue (Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery, 2004), p.18.

3.5 Exploring Dante Gabriel Rossetti's The Beloved Through Creative Writing

¹Dante Gabriel Rossetti to George Rae, 20 December 1864 and Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Ellen Heaton, 2 July 1863, in William E. Frederman (ed.), *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, volume 3 (Cambridge, Woodbridge and Richester, NY 2002-15), p.272 and p.61.

²Charlotte Polidori, personal memorandum of 20 February 1866, reprinted in William Michael Rossetti (ed), *Rossetti Papers, 1862 to 1870* (London, 1903), p.175.

³For an exploration of critical fabulation, see Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe*, 12.2 (June 2008), pp.1-14 (p.11).

3.6 The Beloved (Black 'Boy') Janine Franco

¹I am using question marks (?) alongside masculine identifiers because I initially thought the child in the painting was a girl until learning he was a boy based on an archival visit in Birmingham. A friend of mine who is a transwoman, once shared that she saw a version of herself in this child and so the ambiguity of their gender raised interesting questions.

²Nibling is a gender neutral term to describe the child of your sibling.



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