

# MEG 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2025

## Help! Care and Support in Museums

### Paper abstracts and speaker bios

#### Session One: What is Help and/or Care?

##### **Caring for communities through participatory action research at the Fitzwilliam Museum**

*Emily Bradfield, The Fitzwilliam Museum*

Museums hold significant cultural and educational responsibilities, often serving as spaces of care and support, particularly for individuals facing challenges. "Help" aligns with the museum's role in fostering inclusivity, community wellbeing, and cultural understanding. However, the term "help" can imply a hierarchical relationship. Alternative terms like support, collaboration, or empowerment may better reflect a commitment to partnership, shared responsibility, and participatory research approaches in museum practices.

As part of a wider practitioner research programme at the Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), two projects are being developed to inform Museum research, process and practice:

- **The People's Museum** advances participatory action research to inform cross-departmental collaboration and practice, inspire Museum staff, and help shape the Museum's Masterplan. It engages adults with non-visible disabilities and colleagues to develop a model for shared learning and co-creation.
- **Museums for Life** explores the role of museum-based creative programmes in supporting the wellbeing of older adults, aiming to develop sustainable practices for inclusivity and community engagement. Through collaborative and evidence-based approaches, the programme seeks to position museums as spaces of active care and connection.

This paper responds to critical questions relating to the term "help", examining how processes and methodologies can centre help in museum practices. By creating inclusive spaces and fostering empowered communities, museums can transform into active spaces of community care, ensuring their continued relevance as dynamic institutions for health, wellbeing, and cultural engagement.

*Emily Bradfield is a Practitioner Researcher interested in using creative research methods to explore multisensory and participatory arts engagement to support health and wellbeing. Emily is also an Independent Consultant and Researcher – working at the intersection of arts, health and creativity. She holds a PhD in Creative Ageing (University of Derby), and an MSc in Cultural Events Management (De Montfort University). Emily is Founder and Co-Chair of the*

[British Society of Gerontology's Creative Ageing Special Interest Group](#), and a panel member for the [Independent Research Ethics Committee](#).

## **Taking Care of Windrush**

*Helen Mears, Royal Museums Greenwich*

This paper will focus on 'care' and consider what it means to 'take care' of a set of historical experiences, and individuals and communities impacted by these experiences. It will do so through the lens of 'Windrush'; a political scandal involving British people of Caribbean heritage who were detained, denied legal rights, employment, access to education and healthcare, and in some cases deported.

The British Government's defence to the 'Windrush Scandal' was that the consequences for this demographic were unintended, however an assessment of the Windrush Compensation Scheme identified "a belief ... that government policy has been *uncaring* towards, or even that it has deliberately targeted people of certain races and nationalities".<sup>1</sup> The paper will therefore consider the role taken by museums in engaging with Windrush narratives in the context of an 'uncaring' government. What scope, it will ask, is there for these institutions to provide an ethics of care when the neoliberal state has proved inadequate in its dispensation of the same?<sup>2</sup> How can the sector resist the temptation to make well-meaning but ultimately performative gestures and, instead, engage in practices of care which are ethically-grounded and which push, with intention and stamina, against the hard walls of structural disadvantage? In doing so it will reflect on the National Maritime Museum's sustained engagement with Windrush and its plans for marking Windrush 80 in 2028.

*Helen Mears is Head of Curatorship & Research at Royal Museums Greenwich. Previous roles include Keeper of World Art at the Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove, and Inclusive Collections Officer at Wellcome Collection. Helen's research interests include the practices and politics of participation in museums, especially in terms of the intersections between museums and diaspora communities.*

## **The Afterlife of *Paradise*: a curatorial case study of records, recollection and reassociation**

*Julie Adams and Ava Salzer, British Museum*

It is rare for an exhibition to have an afterlife. Significant exceptions live on through their accompanying catalogues, but few can claim to be remembered

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<sup>1</sup> *Windrush Compensation Scheme: Equality Impact Assessment*, UK Government, 28 March 2022 (emphasis added). Available at: Windrush Compensation Scheme: Equality Impact Assessment (accessible) - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

<sup>2</sup> Hi'iilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, "Radical Care Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times", *Social Text* 142, Vol. 38, No. 1, March 2020, p.3.

and discussed years after their doors have closed to the visiting public. *Paradise: Change and Continuity in the New Guinea Highlands*, on display at the Museum of Mankind from 16 July 1993 – 2 July 1995, is one such exception. In this paper, we reflect on the context and legacy of the exhibition and reveal how that legacy became the catalyst for researching and registering a group of objects, collected by curator Michael O’Hanlon for use in the displays, and subsequently put in storage, where they remained unregistered in boxes labelled ‘Props Paradise’. Reflections on this research and registration process highlight the essential nature of the help provided by museum staff and records when investigating collections histories. The nuanced and contextualised registration of the *Paradise* collection has been made possible by the staff and records (both past and present) consulted. Ranging from personal recollection to tacit knowledge and corporate records, the spectrum of information employed in practice here exemplifies how help from colleagues and documentation can reassociate and restore knowledge about ‘neglected’ collections. The successful outcome of this case study supports an argument for a broadening of understanding about what and who can be helpful to curatorial and documentation practice.

*Julie Adams is Senior Curator, Oceania Collections, at the British Museum where she has worked for the past decade. Her research focuses on facilitating connections between collections and communities and she has carried out research in Aotearoa New Zealand, New Caledonia and Tahiti. She is the author of Museum, Magic, Memory (2021).*

*Ava Salzer is Project Curator: Collection Documentation, at the British Museum where she is currently researching and registering material decanted from Blythe House. Her research considers past and present curatorial and documentation practice surrounding unregistered, uncertain and under-recorded objects.*

## **Caring for ourselves and each other as museum staff**

*Shikha Dwivedi, Kettle’s Yard, University of Cambridge*

Established in 2017, the Change Makers Action Group (CMAG) is a staff network that has been working towards a diverse, inclusive and socially just work culture in the University of Cambridge Museums. In this paper, I share my experience of working as the Chair of the Group (a voluntary position) as a disabled woman of colour while underscoring the structural challenges inherent in historically exclusionary institutions attempting to decolonise. Using auto-ethnography, I aim to systematically analyse my experiences of advocating for social justice among museum staff with the aim of getting a richer understanding of systemic challenges that pose challenge to the inclusion work in museums. With CMAG’s campaign theme for 2025 being ‘Care,’ I aim explore the potential of ‘care’ in overcoming some of those challenges. As the Group collectively thinks how we can care for each other in these divisive times and

pushes for positive change, I aim to explore how we can prevent already marginalised staff at the forefront of museum's decolonial work to become uncared for. How we can use the radical potential of care to create allied networks of support among workforces. The end objective of the paper will be to test ideas and gather advice on how staff networks like CMAG can promote care centred approach to diversity and social justice, while touching upon the conference themes of who needs care, who is helping whom and what a decolonial approach to care would look like without its extractive performativity as seen in many museums.

*Shikha Dwivedi works as Administration & Reporting Assistant at Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge. She graduated from the University of Cambridge with an MPhil degree in Heritage Studies, where she explored, among other things, how heritage needs to be reconceptualised in the Anthropocene. Prior to that, she studied for an MA in Middle Eastern History from the School of Oriental and African Studies, where her research focused on the photographic representations of Palestine from the British Mandate period. She has a BA in South Asian History from Delhi University. Apart from volunteering as Visitor Assistant in several museums in Cambridge, Shikha briefly interned at Historic England, where she helped develop a public engagement model for an exhibition displaying artifacts recovered from a Dutch shipwreck. Shikha is the current chair of the Change Makers Action Group – a group that advocates for social justice as well as equality, diversity and inclusion within the University of Cambridge Museums and Botanic Garden.*

## **Session Two: Can museums be 'helpful'?**

### **'It couldn't be helped': contemporary collecting at National Museums Scotland**

*Mhairi Maxwell, National Museums Scotland*

'To help' is understood, of course, as to make things easier, to come to the aid of someone or something. In the conditional mode, we often refer to things in the past or future which 'could or could not be helped'. This idiomatic expression, whether wistful or pessimistic, describes scenarios which are ultimately perceived as outwith the scope of our immediate control.

Our vision at National Museums Scotland is to 'Inspire people: addressing the challenges of our age'. In our modern age, we are facing immense global environmental, political and societal change in the present. As curator of modern and contemporary history at National Museums Scotland, I am tasked with collecting change as it happens, or soon after. We collect the material culture of so-called changemakers, alongside objects which tell the stories of those 'helplessly' impacted by this change. Contemporary collecting can also mean looking to speculative futures or responding to events experienced as inevitable or arbitrary — in other words, that which 'could (not) be helped'.

Drawing upon the social theory, among others, of Deleuze and Guattari and their thinking around historical process, I will explore in my paper how understanding change using participatory practice methods can ultimately be the way in which a museum is most *help*-ful. Case studies will include current work in progress dealing with immense challenges of our age, including migration and the climate crisis.

*Mhairi has recently joined National Museums Scotland as Curator of Modern and Contemporary History in Scottish History and Archaeology. Mhairi leads the department's contemporary collecting programme, focused on documenting the impact of social, cultural, political and environmental change in twenty-first century Scotland. Stories of migration and emigration are also key themes. Prior to this she has worked as an archaeologist, in community engagement and outreach, and as exhibitions curator at the new V&A Dundee. Her research is interested in materialities of identity, belonging and authenticity, and using participatory practice methodologies she has worked with diverse communities, artists and designers across Scotland and internationally to reveal hidden histories in collections and archives.*

### **Mapping the problem: are guidelines holding back repatriation?**

*Amy Shakespeare, University of Exeter and Lucas da Costa Maciel, National Museum of the American Indian*

A growing concern among museums about addressing their colonial past has led to increased efforts to decolonize their management, curatorial practices, and care for collections, as well as to return ancestors and cultural belongings to communities and countries of origin. Such a shift has been accompanied by a surge of guidelines, manuals, and policies to establish best practices and procedures to address its challenges. While these initiatives are crucial, this paper advocates for a reflective pause on such proliferation by posing a question: Have we fully identified, understood, and reflected on the obstacles associated with repatriation processes, particularly from the perspective of the claimants' needs? This paper highlights the necessity of recognizing gaps in knowledge and fostering dialogue among practitioners from diverse institutions and contexts to diagnose and reflect on these challenges thoroughly. Such efforts may reveal that prescriptive guidelines can only offer partial solutions to problems poorly understood. The future of repatriation efforts might benefit less from step-by-step guidelines, which can differ based on the institution or government holding the collections, and more from shared principles that prioritize the practical needs of the requesting communities. Though this paper does not offer definitive solutions, it aims to foster dialogue among those working at the frontline of repatriation. It encourages identifying and tackling the challenges repatriation brings to the fore based on their practical knowledge of how processes have been done. Finally, we will introduce a new International Repatriation Network to support the aforementioned task.

*Amy Shakespeare is an AHRC-funded PhD Student at the University of Exeter, Founder of Routes to Return, and International Repatriation Specialist at the Association on American Indian Affairs. Amy serves on the board of the Museum Ethnographers Group as their Repatriation Officer and sits on the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles.*

*Lucas da Costa Maciel is a Smithsonian Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Museum of the American Indian, PhD in Social Anthropology (University of Sao Paulo), and member of the Kiñelmapu Koyawe Repatriation Commission, based in the Mapuche land. Currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Museum of the American Indian.*

## **Collaborative Futures: Redefining Museum Practices for Marginalized Collections**

*Maria Cristina Juan, SOAS*

What does "help" mean in the context of ethnographic museums, particularly for orphaned and underrepresented collections? This presentation critically examines the role of museums in redefining "help" beyond its paternalistic connotations, positioning it instead as a collaborative and reciprocal practice. Using case studies from the Philippines and its diaspora, I explore how visibility, access, and co-curation can reimagine the museum's role in addressing historical inequities and creating shared futures.

By engaging these case studies, I argue that "help" in ethnographic museums can shift from being a unidirectional gesture to a collaborative act rooted in transparency, trust, and equity. The paper critically assesses whether "help" is the right term or if alternative frameworks—such as solidarity, restitution, or care—better capture the transformative potential of these practices. Ultimately, this presentation aims to provoke discussion on how museums can act as agents of visibility and restitution, helping to amplify marginalized voices and re-center the narratives of underrepresented communities in global cultural heritage.

*Maria Cristina Juan is a scholar/activist who is deeply engaged in Philippine material culture studies and reconnecting them with source cultures. As project lead for Mapping Philippine Material Culture ([philippinestudies.uk/mapping](http://philippinestudies.uk/mapping)), a global visual inventory of Philippine material culture kept in institutions outside of the Philippines, she has created a source-culture centered platform that seeks to reconnect dispersed material cultures with communities of origin. Her Mapping work has led to sustained relationships with Tboli, Bagobo, and Blaan and Ifugao communities and has facilitated exhibitions and dialogues that bridge diaspora and homeland, underscoring indigenous identity and shared histories through high impact projects. Born and educated in the Philippines but now an academic in the UK, she established Philippine Studies at SOAS in 2018 which has become a vital resource and research hub for Philippine studies - bringing in scholars from the Philippines and creating a research gateway for*

*enabling research and engagement with Philippine archival material ( text, object, sound) in institutions outside of the Philippines. By organizing the Annual Philippine Studies Conferences, now on its 8th year, and a rich programme of art talks, seminars, writing workshops and book launches, she has been a strong advocate for creating spaces for the production of knowledge on the Philippines that emphasize indigenous agency within a decolonial framework.*

### **The Santo Domingo Centre of Excellence for Latin American Research (SDCELAR) at the British Museum: building relationships of aid, support, and commonality**

*Santiago Valencia Parra, British Museum*

This paper will critically and conceptually explore the concept of “help” as multidimensional relationships exercised within contemporary cultural institutions and museums. Taking as an entry point the experience of community-based/led projects developed by the Santo Domingo Centre of Excellence for Latin American Research (SDCELAR) at the British Museum. I aim to shed light on the urgency of thinking on the ontological, ethical, and political dimensions of “help”. The experience of working with and learning from Indigenous and local communities in Latin America will inform these initial ideas. As a result, I will consider the terminology of “help” from a practical perspective, where it is sometimes given or received. This double nature of the word will situate the necessity to understand its multidimensional presence within museums and their power structures. From the perspective of “help”, these systems need to be dismantled, re-aligned, re-defined, and practiced from within terminologies that create new examples of what a museum is and when it needs to ask for, or provide, “help”. By reaching this liminal space, the paper will finally invite to think of curating as an exercise focused on care, and as such, a practice meant to build relationships of aid, support, and commonality.

*Santiago Valencia Parra is a curator and art historian with experience in research and interpretation, exhibition management, museography, and artist liaison. He has guided creative, administrative and operative processes related to art institutions and exhibition-making. His main areas of research are the Global South’s contemporary art scene, and more specifically, Latin American and Caribbean creative practices.*

### **Session Three: Problematizing ‘Help’**

#### **From ‘Savourism’ to Mutual Aid: Help from the 1970s (and earlier)**

*Chris Wingfield, Sainsbury Research Unit*

In the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, Gary Younge remarked that the immediate reaction was ‘almost like teenagers discovering sex where everybody wants to do it very urgently and not particularly very well’.

As many institutions sought to align themselves with anti-racist causes, they risked reiterating long established tropes, including what I propose to call 'saviourism' – to be illustrated by reference to 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary activity. This placed considerable pressure on many younger curators and scholars of colour, whose inclusion in a range of museum projects was prominently displayed in public. Gary Young's comments point to a lack of historical consciousness, so I will highlight some of the pitfalls which surround thinking 'we' are helping people, drawing on dialectical thinking from (around) the 1970s - in particular that of Paolo Freire, Steve Biko, and Carol Gilligan. Instead, I will propose an alternative model of mutual aid, acknowledging that 'we' often need help just as much, if not more, than the people we sometimes like to think we are trying to help.

*Chris Wingfield is Associate Professor in the Arts of Africa at the Sainsbury Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, and Associate Editor of the Journal of the History of Collections. He has previously worked at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.*

## **Whose help is it, anyway? Rethinking Relationships through African Collections**

*Thomas Fearon, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford*

The Rethinking Relationships project aims to build meaningful relationships and provide access to collections for partners in five African countries and diaspora communities in the UK. Working across 4 UK museums the project has the potential to build lasting partnerships with communities and institutions that foreground their concerns and ambitions concerning the African collections. Problematizing the notion of HELP, I will discuss where we think the project can re-frame collaborative museum practice to support and appreciate the production of knowledge outside of typical museum contexts.

I will discuss what the project has achieved so far and outline future work where we aim to facilitate, rather than dictate, forms of museum engagement that benefit the people we work with. From my perspective as a member of the team I will discuss where Eurocentric understandings of Help, simply do not work in this context. Instead, I will ask what are the benefits when a relationship of support reversed? Demonstrating the need to de-center museum practice as we understand it in the UK and remain open to help from our peers and colleagues in the global majority.

Speaking directly to the call, the 1965 Beatles film HELP! will be a useful heuristic throughout the paper to discuss European museum practice, including the limits and potentials that projects like Rethinking Relationships face.

*Thomas Fearon is a member of the Rethinking Relationships project team, based at the Pitt Rivers Museum. The Rethinking Relationships project aims to*

*build meaningful relationships and provide access to collections for partners in five African countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria) and diaspora communities in the UK. Working across 4 UK museums (PRM, MAA, Horniman, NML) this project will develop collaborative museum practices with partners. Alongside his role at the PRM, he is an anthropologist with a research background in religion, diaspora, and identity.*

## **Are Museums Really Helping Us Learn?**

*Anna Stein, The Hockey Museum*

This paper questions the role of museums as facilitators of learning and cultural understanding, drawing on my doctoral research into the presentation of cultures in museums. A particular focus is placed on how intangible cultural heritage—such as oral traditions, rituals, and performing arts—is displayed and interpreted for public engagement. While museums often claim to foster deeper cultural appreciation, this research explores whether their current practices truly enable meaningful learning or merely reinforce surface-level understanding.

Using case studies and visitor engagement data, I examine how audiences interact with displays of intangible culture and identify the challenges museums face in making such heritage accessible and comprehensible. Do museums help bridge cultural divides, or do they inadvertently perpetuate outdated narratives? Furthermore, this paper reflects on whether new methodologies or shifts in curatorial practice are necessary to ensure that museums evolve as spaces for dynamic cultural exchange.

By addressing these questions, this research contributes to ongoing discussions about the role of museums in an increasingly interconnected world. It also highlights the need to reconsider how museums approach their educational mandate, especially in relation to diverse, living cultural traditions.

*Anna Stein holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies from the University of Vienna, where their research focused on bridging the gap between public perceptions and museum representations of tangible and intangible heritage. With a background in museum and gallery studies from Kingston University, they have worked extensively in collections management, education, and audience engagement across prestigious institutions such as the Science Museum and the Charterhouse. Their doctoral work examines how museums present intangible cultural heritage, exploring audience engagement and the evolving role of museums in fostering cultural understanding. Beyond academia, they bring experience in educational program development, community outreach, and multilingual transcription for major cultural institutions, emphasising innovative approaches to storytelling and digital learning. Passionate about rethinking how museums facilitate learning and cultural exchange, Anna continues to explore dynamic ways to bridge historical narratives with contemporary audiences.*

## **“Help the Disabled?”<sup>3</sup> Framing Global Disability Heritages in UK Museums: UK Disabled Perspectives**

*Anna Freed, Freelance, Disabled Students UK*

Help is a term central to public narratives about disabled people, one problematised and critiqued in disability communities. In museums, support can still sometimes be patchwork, or access-as-afterthought. Only recently have disabled people been treated as a distinct audience who want to engage with our collective heritage, and this is where museums can truly “help” UK disability communities.

In myriad exhibitions, such as the People’s History Museum’s *Nothing About Us Without Us*,<sup>4</sup> British disabled people have co-produced British histories as lived experience experts. Yet investigating disability in Global Cultures collections raise a tension between all British disabled people as stakeholders in a global marginalised heritage, and specific descendant communities as primary stakeholders, which remains unresolved in most Western-based global disability work.

But have we considered British disabled people are ready to grapple with that tension?

This paper is based on my MA dissertation, where I looked at Andean archaeological case studies with focus groups of non-Andean disabled people mostly based in the UK. In enthusiastic discussions around presenting disability, formats for public engagement, and co-productive best practice, participants articulated a path for UK museums to approach global disability history. An approach where consciousness of museums’ impacts of UK politics and community is retained, but where Indigenous and descendant disabled voices are not just present, but centred, leading conversation.

Museums, in sharing global disability stories, have a unique potential to “help” disabled people, as a nexus for knowledge-sharing, community-building, and empowerment through art, histories, and hopes for better disabled futures.

### *Explanatory Note*

This paper aims to address outlined themes of: defining/problematising the term, the who/how/where of help, and process/practice providing ‘help’ in the context of disability-related co-production, curation, and education regarding Global Cultures and ethnographic collections.

Footnotes attempt to follow the style used in the 2024 abstracts, and may be unnecessary, especially the former explaining the title quote – I am not sure of how well-known it is as a problematic phrase.

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<sup>3</sup> A once-common refrain of charities in the UK, parodied by the People’s History Museum with a charity donation pot reading “*Help the Normals.*”

<sup>4</sup> *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disabled people’s activism: past, present and future*, 16 November 2022 - 16 October 2023, People’s History Museum, Manchester.

*Anna Freed (she/her) is a recent Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas MA graduate from the Sainsbury Research Unit at UEA. She is currently a disability consultant affiliated with Disabled Students UK, and MEG's acting Accessibility Officer. She is interested in the disabled experience in the past and present, particularly Indigenous disability epistemologies, museologies and archaeologies. She is white, autistic, and has endometriosis, Crohn's, and chronic nerve pain.*

#### **Session Four: Panel - Collections Care: Systems Included**

*Louise McAward-White (British Film Institute), Emily Bradfield (Fitzwilliam Museum), Kathleen Lawther (University of Leicester) and Jennifer Macmillan (British Film Institute)*

We propose a Panel Discussion applying concepts of help, care and support to collections systems and data work. Systems and data work is often overlooked, yet is critical to all aspects of museum work, including access, exhibitions, interpretation, and conservation. Expectations of data are rising, whether in terms of digitisation volume, using AI, or increasingly complex ways for the public to access data. Simultaneously, support for staff whose work underpins these endeavours is minimal if not absent.

Aspects which the panel could discuss include:

- Perception of systems as a barrier to caring activity
- Providing technical support to colleagues, and being seen as an extension of the system or process
- Assumption that systems and data are neutral authorities – and that colleagues don't need to be cared for (e.g. trigger warnings on external systems but not internal)
- Supposition that the system is acting as a record of care for collections and communities (and impact of a lack of care for staff)
- Data standards as standards of care for collections
- How systems and data support working with community partners
- Impact of changing practices (e.g. rethinking cataloguing) on care for systems and data
- How networks provide support

At the heart of this discussion is the almost infinite potential of systems and data to help, support and care for colleagues, communities and collections. Often, the people working with systems and data are working very hard to improve that support, in the face of organisational misunderstanding and systemic underfunding.

*Louise McAward-White has been Collections Data Manager at British Film Institute since May 2023. Louise has worked in cultural heritage for over 15 years including 5.5 years in other roles at BFI, documentation at V&A, visitor experience at Wycombe Museum and curator at Amersham Museum; as well as a stint at Axiell (the collections management software company). Louise is a co-Founder of Fair Museum Jobs, GEM Mentoring Champion, and a trustee for the Social History Curators Group.*

*Emily Bradfield is a Practitioner Researcher interested in using creative research methods to explore multisensory and participatory arts engagement to support health and wellbeing. Emily is also an Independent Consultant and Researcher – working at the intersection of arts, health and creativity. She holds a PhD in Creative Ageing (University of Derby), and an MSc in Cultural Events Management (De Montfort University). Emily is Founder and Co-Chair of the [British Society of Gerontology's Creative Ageing Special Interest Group](#), and a panel member for the [Independent Research Ethics Committee](#).*

*Kathleen Lawther is a Future100 PhD Scholar at the University of Leicester researching the history and practice of documentation and its impact on museums' contribution to the digital cultural record. She is also a freelance curator and collections consultant, with experience working on the research and documentation of historic and contemporary world cultures collections.*

*Jennifer Macmillan is the Collections Systems Specialist at the British Film Institute, where she manages and improves the complex collections systems that underpin the working of a national collection. Previously, she worked in collections systems at the Imperial War Museum. She is the Co-Chair of the Adlib and Axiell Collections UK User Group.*

## **Session Five: Evolving Practices of Help in Museums**

### **The display of San hunters in imperial Britain and the circulation of body casts: Complicating help**

*Elizabeth Elbourne, McGill University*

From 1846 to 1856, four San adults from southern Africa and a baby were displayed throughout mid-Victorian Britain, in shows that included dancing, illustrating hunting techniques, orating in /Xam and performing mock fights. The names of three were recorded as Simon, Gaiki and Stingy. In 1851, the cast maker Domenico Brucciani (best known for casting art for the Victoria and Albert and other museums) made body casts of two of the group, possibly Simon and Gaiki. Copies of the casts were subsequently circulated as ethnological objects to several museums and exhibits, including the Liverpool Museum, the British Museum, the Edinburgh Surgeons' Museum, the University of Aberdeen, the Ethnological Society in London, and the second Crystal Palace exhibit at Sydenham. People became simulacra. This paper will explore both the performances themselves and then the circulation and uses of the casts and

of related artefacts, including ways in which subsistence hunters were presented and ways in which casts were used to support ideas about “race” and human development. I also ask what surviving records might hint about the lived experience of the group. Despite economic exploitation, some organizers and commentators saw themselves as “helping” the San and other Indigenous peoples by spreading knowledge. Did members of the troupe possibly even imagine that they would help by sharing their own knowledge, at a time at which it was endangered by colonial violence and the enslavement of San children? What issues does this very difficult history raise about “help”, “knowledge” and public display?

*Elizabeth Elbourne is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and Classical Studies at McGill University in Montreal. She is working in the UK in 2024-25 as Smuts Visiting Fellow at Cambridge. Her publications include Empire, Kinship and violence: Family histories, Indigenous rights and the making of settler colonialism, 1770-1842 (Cambridge University Press, 2022); Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); and Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne (eds.), Sex, Power and Slavery (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014). She is currently working on the colonial imagination of hunters, with particular attention to southern Africa. She is also currently co-editor with Shino Konishi of volume 3: Colonialism and Decolonization, 1750-1914 in Christopher Lee and Kris Manjapra (eds), The Cambridge History of Colonialism and Decolonization (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming. 5 vols). From 2010-2015 she was joint Editor in Chief of the Journal of British Studies.*

## **Helping Museum Ethnographers: preservation, guardianship and its challenges**

*Steven Hooper, Sainsbury Research Unit*

This paper takes an upbeat view of the existence of ethnographic collections in the UK, starting from the position that, despite increasingly being regarded disapprovingly as the illegitimate children of traumatic relationships, these objects were preserved, and they have mostly been well looked after by generations of curators who have taken responsibility for their care and preservation. This point was brought home forcibly when the President of Fiji visited the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge in 2012, where substantial collections exist that were acquired during Fiji's colonial period. Fijian Art Research project members were anxious about the guests' reaction to seeing these Fijian treasures in Cambridge. However, instead of questions about how it all left Fiji, the President said, “Goodness me, I had no idea all these things were here, and that you have kept them for over 100 years. It must have cost a lot of money to look after them so well, and store them. Thank you.” We were surprised by this unexpected appreciation of the efforts of collectors and curators, and the value set on preservation.

Using several examples, this paper will reflect on an apparently widening gap between the facts of acquisition of ethnographic material and current political and ethical concerns about the status of these collections. MEG members over 50 years, many operating alone in their institutions, can feel under pressure from local authorities and other groups to justify the existence of the collections they care for, and indeed their own professional existence. A focus on rigorous historical assessment of collecting circumstances, and on cultural behaviour globally, can perhaps give confidence that curators of ethnographic collections will have another half century of successfully meeting challenges that arise.

*Professor Steven Hooper, Director, Sainsbury Research Unit, UEA. Social anthropologist, teacher, researcher and exhibition curator, specialising in Oceania; longstanding member of MEG.*

### **Museum Geographies: The Language of Archives in Producing People, Places, and Pauses through the Practice of Photography in Colonial Archives.**

*Haidamteu Zeme N, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi*

The project examines theorisations of public histories in Indigenous contexts through documentary practices such as photography. It begins with the question of 'what' constitutes and constructs history: Is it oral tellings? Is it written and/or inscribed records? Is it material artefacts? Is it the living memory of people? Or is it the collective consciousness of the public? Early documented records of the Indigenous Naga peoples trace back to British colonial archives from the early 19th century onwards in the form of administrative writings (J.P. Hutton 1921, 1922, 1926, 1937, and J.P. Mills 1921), anthropological inquiries/studies (Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf 1935-1937, Marguerite Milward 1948), travelogues (Ursula Graham Bower 1945, Connie Shakespeare 1900-1902), as well as American missionary monographs (Mary M. Clark 1907), among others. Significant 'collections' from these expeditions, surveys, and fieldwork are currently housed in international public museums, including the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, among others. While conversations around repatriation in recent years have led to the 'returning' and 'removal' of certain displays (e.g., human remains), questions on ownership, accessibility, and spectatorship remain. What happens when objects 'return'? What are they returning to? When materials bearing histories of violence and exploitation return to the community, who receives them? Many BIPOC scholars do not speak the language of the (A)rchive.<sup>5</sup> Within ornate cases of wood, glass, and brass with neatly typed-out cards, pieces of history are anchored. Their viewers continue to be epistemically privileged. Beyond spatial studies of the museum, curators, conservators, donors, and physical

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<sup>5</sup> In the polemical piece titled 'English Mantra,' Kuffir writes, "English is the language of international strife/ to grow indigo, tea, coffee, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane and a thousand other crops/The whole world will one day speak only English and India will be its call centre" (2017). <https://www.roundtableindia.co.in/the-english-mantra/>

structures, can we trace geographies that are “more than representational” (Hayden Lorimer, 2005)? Can we deconstruct the Arkheion and allow multiplicities of experientialities to exist?

These fluctuations, pauses, and gaps in naming actively reproduce power relations and speak to the question of value accorded to certain histories and memories. Distinctions between ‘public history’ as opposed to ‘private history’ appear blurry when we consider historical socio-political proceedings—for instance, private letters and personal (or) amateur photographs of one era *becoming* evidence of narratives of people’s lives when interacted with in the present. The aim is not to define what public history is or not, but rather to examine ‘how’ it presents itself to us in the contemporary. These postulations allow researchers to examine material artefacts such as photographs, textiles, and articles ranging from ritual significance to everyday usage as historical records that converge a host of perspectives. Photos visualize collective memories and inspire certain registers in viewers. It is a performative site that primarily constructs, produces, and elicits meanings (Elizabeth Harvey and Maiken Umbach 2015). The placement of photographs within an institution, within the contours of national heritage, within the public domain and discourse merits the question of the effect photos and artefacts in general carry. The paper seeks to dis/place the othering of minoritized histories, calling into question not only the photographic impulse of colonialism but also the continued tradition of pauses and blanks within established institutions.

*Haidamteu Zeme N is a doctoral candidate and Teaching Assistant at the Humanities and Social Sciences Department, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. Her research interests are language, translation studies, and affective archives. She was a Zubaan Fellow from 2022-2023, Summer School Advanced Fellow at The Highland Institute in 2024, and currently is the SSAF-Asia Art Archive Grantee for 2024-2025. Her writings on art, translation, and conflict have been published at MeMeraki, South Asian Review, and Sapiens. Haidamteu’s work follows Jamaica Kincaid’s 1988 conception of “small places,” and reflects her own experience being in them.*

## **Bringing the Hull University SE Asia Museum back to life: the role of volunteers**

*Monica Janowski, University of Hull*

I took over the role of Honorary Curator of the museum in 2022. It had been effectively ‘asleep’ since about 2012, when the previous Curator, Lewis Hill, became too unwell to be involved any longer. He died in 2023 and I took over without any significant handover to find the museum office was stuffed to the gills with paperwork, donated and as yet unaccessioned objects, photo prints and slides, and with a non-working computer with an outdated Modes cataloguing system on it! The museum is currently more or less invisible, even within the university, and needs to be oriented towards communicating locally.

I have a growing number of volunteers, mostly students from the university, who have helped me to begin to put the museum back on its feet and begin to turn it into a resource that is relevant to the local community. I will talk about the work we have been doing to achieve this.

*Monica Janowski is a social anthropologist researching in Borneo. She made collections for the British Museum and Sarawak Museum in 1986-88 – see her book *The Forest, Source of Life: The Kelabit of Sarawak* (British Museum and Sarawak Museum 1991). Coming out of *The Cultured Rainforest* (2007-2011) which she co-led with archaeologist Prof. Graeme Barker, she curated exhibitions in Sarawak and in Cambridge. Last year she curated the first SE Asia exhibition at the University of Hull, *Heroines, Heroes and Cosmic Power*. More details of her work are on her website at [monicajanowski.co.uk](http://monicajanowski.co.uk).*

## **Session Six: Help and Care for Staff, Visitors & Community**

### **Healing and harm: what constitutes care in medical museums?**

*Cornelia Thompson, UCL*

Medical museums present unique opportunities for reflection on life, mortality, and experiences of ourselves and others. This paper will share findings from my PhD research on audience engagement in these spaces. Museums whose contents trigger intense emotions acknowledge the need to support staff and visitors in navigating these emotions. Such work focuses on sites of "dark" or difficult heritage. I argue medical museums differ from these sites in one key aspect: the meaning of their objects is less fixed. A single object can represent inspiring innovation, historical harm of marginalised populations, a life-saving surgery, or a traumatic experience - or all of these at once. How does care look different in museums that represent both healing and harm?

This paper will demonstrate how medical museums can help staff and visitors navigate these fraught encounters. I will examine practices of care in museums that present painful histories, specifically the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the 9/11 Memorial and Museum and the International Slavery Museum. Considering ethnographic data from my research, as well as work on trauma theory and personal experiences of illness, I will discuss what offerings best fit medical museums. My research shows that medical museum staff and volunteers regularly provide care to visitors in emotional distress - this paper aims to help those workers by acknowledging the emotional cost of this care, and to help medical museums by providing frameworks to support care in practice.

*Cornelia is a PhD candidate in the UCL Institute of Archaeology researching medical museums as distinct heritage spaces. Through engaging directly with visitors and museums staff, she considers the histories and approaches of medical museums, what draws visitors to these places, and the wellbeing potential of these collections. This project grew out of her Heritage Studies MA*

*and her personal experience visiting medical museums to process my own illness. She aims to understand the significance of these spaces and what they mean for other people. She also has an MA in American History and a longstanding research interest in how humans respond to difficult situations, personally and as a collective. Originally from Boston, USA, she now lives and works in London.*

### **To safeguard or to stymie? How can volunteers be supported to communicate colonial and decolonial histories?**

*Laurence Maidment-Blundell, UCL*

As cultural institutions are increasingly being called upon to critically engage with their colonial past and its contemporary legacies, limited academic consideration has been given towards how this implicates their volunteer-base. Volunteers are fundamental for heritage organisations to operate on a day-to-day basis, and public-facing volunteers possess significant influence in shaping the overall visitor experience, meaning that they are in a pivotal position to either support or subvert their organisation's stance on communicating their colonial and decolonial histories. Organisations have a specific duty of care to 'help' and support volunteers through forms of safeguarding to limit the intensity of emotional labour and the likelihood of conflict that they may be confronted with. Drawing upon interviews and participant observation, this paper critically examines the agency of various public-facing volunteers as part of their Serious Leisure at an internationally renowned 'Museum of the World' to explore their underlying motivation to either follow or disregard the safeguarding procedures in place to prevent conflict, or the institutional expectation of them to not engage in anything 'controversial'. Conflict and power struggles ensue based on the difference between the systems of care employed to safeguard volunteers which reinforces a view of how the institution expects their volunteers to act versus what volunteers feel morally obliged to do.

*Laurence Maidment-Blundell is a fourth-year PhD student at the UCL Institute of Archaeology. His work focuses on the potential contributions and responses of volunteers to museum decolonisation.*

### **Taking time to make time, taking care to take care: evolution of the Colston Statue**

*Lisa Graves and Helen McConnell Simpson, Bristol Museums*

We are proposing giving an amended version of the talk we gave at the MA conference in Leeds in November this year. The title was Displaying contentious history - putting Colston's statue on permanent exhibition, but what we focused on was the iterative nature of our displays between 2021 and 2024 with a view to the next stages to come for displaying the legacies of the TTEA (Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans). We discussed the different styles of

consultation and collaboration that happened at each step and also discussed our growing awareness and focus on help, care and support for the people we worked with and staff involved. This has led to us building on experiences in other previous 'decolonial' projects where there has been a lack of care and support, in order to inform our internal participatory practice toolkit. Suggested rejigged talk title: Taking time to make time, taking care to take care: evolution of the Colston Statue.

*Lisa Graves, World Cultures Curator – worked with World Cultures collections in Newcastle, Birmingham and Manchester before coming to Bristol 18 years ago. Have worked on regional ethnographic surveys, repatriations, exhibitions and decolonial projects and as a long standing member of the Museum Ethnographers Group committee.*

*Helen McConnell Simpson, History, Senior Curator – background in Social History, started career in Bristol then set up new historic house museum and worked as Museum Development Officer before returning to Bristol three years ago to oversee Social, Industrial and Maritime History collections. Experience in creating exhibitions, community consultation and exploring methodologies of participatory practice. Formerly Chair and long term committee member of the Social History Curators Group.*

## **From Conflict to Care: Reframing Stories of Displacement through Collaborative practice**

*Zoe Cormack and Vikki Hawkins, British Museum*

Collaborating closely with Sudanese and South Sudanese community members, a new display in the British Museum's galleries will focus on personal stories of loss, resilience, and re-orientation in the aftermath of war and displacement in Sudan. Featuring objects associated with daily life, it will explore how relationships to 'ordinary' objects are transformed by conflict. Through a sensitive and ethical approach, we aim to develop a community project and display that emphasises the importance of care and support, both within the community and in museum practice.

New interpretation techniques will be tested through commissioned graphic artworks that translate personal stories into visual representations, helping visitors to understand the impacts of the war in Sudan and personal connections to the objects. The illustrations will also offer protection for the identities of participants, allowing for a flexible, respectful telling of traumatic experiences.

A key element of the project is the focus on care in the process itself. This includes providing pastoral support during the workshops, ensuring informed consent and offering optional external professional therapeutic assistance to participants and staff. New guidelines, protocols, and approaches are being tested and evaluated to inform best practices for future collaborative projects as

the British Museum embarks on its Masterplan to redesign its permanent galleries. This paper will explore how the project aims to centre care and wellbeing in the content and process of the display, and set a new standard for ethical, community-driven storytelling.

*Zoe Cormack is a curator for Africa at the British Museum. She previously worked as a project curator on the British Council Cultural Protection Fund project 'Safeguarding Sudan's Living Heritage from Conflict and Climate Change.' Before joining the British Museum, Zoe worked on academic research projects focused on understanding the importance of heritage in (post-)conflict South Sudan. She has conducted long term ethnographic research in Warrap state and in a 'protection of civilians site' adjacent to the UN base in Juba. Zoe is a co-editor of the book 'Pieces of a Nation: South Sudanese Heritage in Museum Collections' (Sidestone Press, 2021) and the author of 'Post-conflict Memory and Heritage: South Sudan and beyond' in the Routledge Handbook of Critical African Heritage Studies, Sinamai et al (eds) (Routledge, 2024).*

*Vikki Hawkins is a curator at the British Museum, working on the Masterplan project to deliver a comprehensive redisplay of the museum's galleries. Prior to this, Vikki was a curator at the Imperial War Museum, where she delivered the £30.7 million transformation of the permanent Second World War Galleries at IWM London. The galleries were awarded 'Permanent Exhibition of the Year 2022' at the Museum and Heritage Awards. Vikki is the co-author of Total War: A People's History of the Second World War (Thames & Hudson, 2021) and serves as Managing Editor of the British Journal for Military History. Her recent publication, in the edited volume Enemy Encounters in Modern Warfare (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), examines how curatorial and interpretive approaches, international collaborations, and public consultations have reshaped the portrayal of the 'enemy' in a national war museum.*

## **Reveal and Connect: Reviewing African and Caribbean Collections, Supporting Colleagues and Communities**

*Nikki Grout and John Giblin, National Museums Scotland*

Many Scots were enthusiastic participants in the British Empire, often returning to Scotland with objects that they had 'collected'. Many of these so-called 'ethnographic' collections now reside in museums distributed across Scotland. With few exceptions outside of the largest museums, however, organisations rarely have geographically relevant curatorial expertise on their staff, which affects collection care, knowledge, and engagement. This was reflected in a national consultation conducted in 2019, in which sector colleagues requested help around African and Caribbean collections, in particular a desire to develop collections knowledge and confidence relating to provenance and diaspora and descendent community connections. In response, National Museums Scotland, the Hunterian (University of Glasgow), Glasgow Life Museums and University of Aberdeen Collections formed a consortium to take forward a national project,

Reveal and Connect: African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland. Advised by a Steering Group with members from diaspora organisations based in Scotland and museums based in African and Caribbean countries, the project aimed to reveal African and Caribbean collections in 32 Scottish museums and to connect them with interested diaspora and descendent communities. Although projects such as Reveal and Connect are often framed in terms of helping descendent and diaspora communities to access collections, in this paper we focus on the 'Help! Care and Support' requested by Scottish museums with 'ethnographic' collections but without 'ethnographic' expertise. In so doing, we will contribute to conference discussions around who these collections are for and why, who needs and who wants our help, who is helping whom, new methodologies of help, and whose help the Consortium needed to undertake this work while remaining alert to dangers of perpetuating extractive, performative and colonial approaches to consultation.

*Nikki Grout is Project Curator at Reveal and Connect at National Museums Scotland.*

*John Giblin is Keeper of Global Arts, Cultures and Design at National Museums Scotland.*

### **Session Seven: Panel - How can I help? Collections Moves as Collective Practice**

*Kirsty Kernohan, Katrina Dring, Anne Doering, Lucie Carreau (with a pre-recorded Ayesha Fuentes), Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge*

MAA's Stores Move Project, documenting and moving over 300,000 objects to the new Centre for Material Culture draws to a close at the end of April 2025. The project has created daily challenges for its staff as they have come together to plan and care for the needs of each object as it moves. This panel brings together voices from diverse roles across the project including collections, workshop, conservation, and coordination staff. We reflect on how project practices have been grounded in mutual support and team cohesion, whilst looking towards the future impact of the project. Through case studies of objects and people we explore the following themes:

**Help and guidance:** How can written guidelines and structured approaches to collections work empower people in large teams to take ethical and research-based approaches to documenting and caring for objects in practice?

**Mutual help:** How can people with diverse skillsets and professional backgrounds including collections, conservation, and workshop staff work effectively together to care for the same objects? How might this result in skill sharing and development across roles in the museum sector?

**Who can we help?** How might the better online visibility, documentation, and

accessibility afforded by the project facilitate future work with the collections. What is the potential and limitations of this kind of work?

*Lucie Carreau is an art historian specialised in Pacific material culture, with a wider and strong interest in the history of collections and historical museum processes. Over the last 15 years, she has held many different posts at MAA, marrying technical and research skills to improve the care, documentation and research potential of collections. Since 2020, she has held the role of Collections Team Coordinator on MAA's Stores Move project, helping to deliver the move and safe storage of over 300,000 objects to a new facility, and supporting the team in trouble-shooting problems arising from the documentation of the collections.*

*Anne Döring joined the Stores Move project as administrator in August 2023 to support the team during the crucial final phase of the project. Having completed her MA in English Historical Linguistics, History, and Sociology at Cologne University in 2007, Anne started her professional life in the travel insurance sector in the UK. She brings more than ten years' experience in team leadership and senior business management to her current role, which comprises planning and reporting responsibilities as well as hands-on help with moves and collection documenting and care.*

*Katrina Dring is a collections professional with expertise in caring for anthropology and archaeology collections. As a Collections Assistant on the Stores Move project at MAA since 2020, she has helped to document, pack and move 300,000 objects to the Centre for Material Culture. Taking a leading role in designing new storage solutions for particularly fragile or vulnerable objects, she enjoys working in a multi-disciplinary and hands-on fashion. Katrina is particularly interested in crafting processes and enjoys using her own craft experience/experiments to enhance her museum practice.*

*Mark Elliott is Curator in Anthropology at MAA, working primarily with collections from Asia, Africa and Europe. His research focuses on South Asia, intersecting with historical anthropology, critical provenance studies and histories of museum practice. He has co-curated exhibitions including *Another India* (2017), *Buddha's Word* (2014) and *Assembling Bodies* (2009). Originally from Northern Ireland, Mark studied social anthropology in St Andrews, trained as a theatre electrician in Exeter, and did his PhD in Social Anthropology at Cambridge. He has been at MAA, wearing all manner of different hats, since 2003, and has worked on MAA's Stores Move project since 2018.*

*Ayesha Fuentes is an objects conservator and researcher specializing in the care and handling of archaeological and anthropological collections. She is a graduate of the UCLA/Getty MA Program in the Conservation of Archaeological and Ethnographic Materials and in 2021 completed her PhD at SOAS University of London, writing on the use of human remains in Tibetan and Himalayan ritual objects. She was Isaac Newton Trust Research Associate in Conservation at MAA (2021-2024), working with the Stores Move while investigating access,*

*ethics and collections care as knowledge exchange. She is currently a Research Associate for the Hidden in Plain Sight project with Queen Mary University of London and Cambridge University Library.*

*Kirsty Kernohan received her PhD from the University of Aberdeen (2021) focusing on intergeneration colonial collecting practices amongst aristocratic families and the lasting relationships between their collections and contemporary communities. She has subsequently worked as a collections practitioner with photography collections at Dumfries Museum and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge. She is currently Assistant Coordinator for the Stores Move project at MAA.*

## **Session Eight: Innovative and Creative Practice**

### **Unveiling the History and Tradition in a Digital Space: Yoruba Pottery at the University of Ibadan Ethnography Museum (Ongoing Project)**

*Gabriel Olugbenga Matesun, University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

Museums serve as custodians of cultural heritage, preserving and sharing the histories, traditions, and legacies of diverse communities. This paper examines the transformative role of digital spaces in fostering help and support within museums, for communities, and among professionals. The digitalization of museum collections offers unprecedented opportunities to expand access, foster inclusivity, and address the challenges of colonial and superficial representations.

Through the lens of a three-year museum digitalization ongoing project, this paper explores how digital platforms can preserve tangible and intangible heritage while fostering dialogue and collaboration among colleagues, researchers, and community representatives. By integrating community voices in curatorial practices and utilizing digital tools to document traditions, museums can redefine the notion of help from extractive practices to co-creative processes that emphasize shared ownership and care.

The study highlights challenges, including the emotional and structural costs of such transformations, while emphasizing the importance of sustainable digital practices and the ethical implications of virtual representation. By leveraging digital tools, museums can build resilient networks of care, ensuring that help is inclusive, meaningful, and equitable.

This paper advocates for embracing digitalization as a transformative pathway for reimagining museum practices, fostering collaboration, and preserving the legacies of diverse cultures in an interconnected world.

*Gabriel Olugbenga Matesun is a Higher Museum Officer\Curator at the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, with over 15 years of experience in museum and cultural heritage management. He specializes in curatorial duties, artifact preservation,*

*cataloging, and the digitalization of museum collections. Gabriel has contributed to the development of museum practices through collaborations with researchers, as well as the successful execution of exhibitions and fieldwork programs. He holds an MSc in Computer Science, a Master's in Information Science, and a BSc in Computer and Information Science, all of which underpin his innovative approach to integrating technology into ethnographic research and museum operations. Gabriel's work has included leading roles in major projects, such as the RE-ORG Nigeria initiative, which restructured museum storage systems, and the development of digital tools for artifact documentation. Gabriel is passionate about fostering community engagement in museums and promoting knowledge dissemination through innovative media. He is currently leading a three-year digitalisation project and training programs aimed at advancing museum practices in the university community, and especially in Nigeria.*

### **Ticket to Ride: Navigating Global-Local Narratives in Satellite Museums**

*Alejandra Linares Figueruelo, Universitat de Barcelona*

Satellite museums, as extensions of major institutions, are uniquely positioned to bridge the global aspirations of their parent institutions with the local needs of the communities they serve, making them vital spaces for exploring the ethics and practices of help, care, support, and inclusion. This paper examines how these museums conceptualise and operationalise help through a comparative analysis of two contrasting case studies: Tate Liverpool, known for its community-centred approaches, and Hermitage Barcelona, a contentious project that exposed significant tensions between institutional ambition and local accountability. Using frameworks from participatory museology (Sandell 2007; Simon 2010) and relational ethics (Tronto 1993), this study examines how satellite museums function as spaces of help and support for colleagues, communities, and collections. Tate Liverpool highlights the potential of these institutions to embed care into operational structures and curatorial practices, fostering sustained relationships and providing meaningful support for institutional collaborators through proximity practices, inclusive programming, and commitment to multivocality (MacLeod 2005). By contrast, the Hermitage Barcelona project demonstrates the risks of neglecting local needs and failing to establish trust, illustrating the fragility of satellite museums as vehicles of care when economic imperatives and branding overshadow meaningful community engagement (Guasch & Zulaika 2005). This paper argues that satellite museums must extend care beyond collections to address the needs of both local audiences and institutional collaborators. It advocates for participatory approaches grounded in listening, reciprocity, and inclusion, highlighting how centring care and help can foster meaningful relationships with communities, colleagues, and collaborators.

*Alejandra Linares-Figueruelo is a PhD candidate at the Universitat de Barcelona, specialising in global-local narratives and multivocalities in satellite*

*museums networks amidst neo-colonial legacies and asymmetrical power relationships. Originally trained in Archaeology and Anthropology, she is specialised in museum studies and community-based cultural policies in Latin America. Her work focuses on the role of museums as 'contact zones', forging new paths in transcultural collaborations by adopting multiperspectival approaches to exploring collections related to the past, future, and present. She actively contributes to international projects that bridge global museum practices, where she centres around sustainable and reparative practices of (international) collaboration. Since 2024, she has been a Teaching Assistant at ESADE Business School on 'Society and Sustainability' (MSc) and 'Racial (In)justices' (MBA).*

### **Searching for Footprints in the Reticent Sand: Embracing creative practice as a living and breathing strategy in museums**

*Francisco R. Carrasco, Luma Creations*

We think of museums as a window to human history; a place where objects that tell us about our past are exhibited. We are often given a glimpse of times gone by and what lessons we might learn from past events and experiences. These are places full of priceless objects that depict wonders and tragedies and momentous occasions however, they are often void of energy and life and as we shuffle past other humans eager to know more, they portray an eerie silence that engulfs us.

Much of the museum's work when engaging communities has happened within their framework and frame of reference. Although inclusion and diversity in Museums has increased, this engagement has often happened on the museum's terms and I propose that for real collaboration to flourish, museums have to lead on equitable partnerships which ensure that diverse communities and their needs are taken into account and not simply overlooked using museum processes and regulations as a barrier to make decisions on how communities (specially global majority communities) should interact with museums.

This paper will explore the role that creative artists and practitioners can play in this aspect of the work of museums. By embracing creative practice as a living and breathing strategy, the artists can create a sustainable thread that runs through a programme to invite engagement and input and develop honest and unbiased relationships, feeding these gigantic structures with everyone's voices and experiences as standard practice.

*Francisco is the CEO & Creative Director of Luma Creations (aka One Latin Culture), the leading Latin American Arts & Culture organisation in the north West and National portfolio organisation for the Arts Council England. He is a composer, writer, producer and the artistic director of LA FERIA International festival of Latin American Arts & Cultures. Francisco has managed local, national and international projects and has been Artistic Director of several*

*festivals including the One World Festival, the Merseyside International Street Arts Festival (Brouhaha International) and the Chester Carnival of Giants. He was the CEO of MZONE (Liverpool & Merseyside Youth Music Action Zone), which he developed from inception, creating an annual programme of musical education with over 10,000 children and young people. He has produced large scale programmes including the Street Arts programme for the Liverpool Millennium celebrations.*