

THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

Final Report on the 2019 International Training Program at The British Museum

by APRILLE P. TIJAM, Philippines

The British Experience - this title encompasses what I have learned from my participation in the **2019 International Training Programme at The British Museum**. I completed the programme filled with gratitude—first, to the British Museum’s ITP for my acceptance to the programme and, most importantly, to the **Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust**, for the opportunity to be an ITP fellow, with their full trust and support.

I took home with me inspirations from my experiences and the museum professionals I met at the British Museum (BM) and my UK Partner placement at the Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) in Newcastle. I have great respect for the ITP programme and its implementers spearheaded by its manager Claire Messenger and all the collaborators at the British Museum. Most especially the funders who entrusted to the BM the capacity to make the ITP happen all through these 14 years.

I am in awe of the diversity of backgrounds and personalities of my co-participants and salute their achievements in their respective specialisations. The overflowing generosity of information and knowledge shared by all has enriched what I currently know from “a little more” to “a lot more”. I came home with a re-affirmation of my belief that there is so much to learn in life—both on the personal and professional levels.

Enhancement of Collections Access and Capacity Building

In my capacity as Senior Manager for Exhibitions and Collections at Ayala Museum, it has been my objective since I assumed my position in 2008 to engage more with objects and artworks from the Ayala Museum’s collection through various educational programmes. This is on top of the permanent exhibitions where selected objects and artworks from the collection were showcased. Ayala Museum does not have enough space to showcase the collections through exhibitions all throughout the year. Thus, I have spearheaded and project-managed collections-based educational programmes since 2013. These include *Collections Corner* (copies were shared with ITP Programme, BM’s Department of Asia, and 2019 ITP Fellows), *Special Collections Exhibitions*, *Travelling Exhibitions*, and *Monday Studies*.

After the 2019 ITP, I am inspired to adopt the following ideas within the context of the current education programmes at Ayala Museum, with the main objective of engaging more of its collections. The proposals are very timely as I am preparing, together with colleagues in the Collections Unit, programmes for collections to be presented when the Ayala Museum re-opens to the public in 2020. The museum is undergoing renovations that began in June 2019.

▪ **Collections Access-Hands on Desk** (inspired by The British Museum)

It has been quite a challenge in Philippine Museum practice to make our audience understand why objects or artworks may not be touched while these are on exhibit. It is quite uncommon in museum practice in the Philippines for study collection materials to be made available for visitors to touch, scrutinise, and learn more through direct handling. The *Hands on Desks* have inspired me to adopt this idea with proposed provisions for new objects – of the same kind and function as that object catalogued in the Ayala Museum collection – to be used. This will address the clamour of the museum audience, most especially students, who wish to “touch and feel the objects”. This proposal has been met with positive consideration by my museum’s Director. A prominent corner on one floor is being proposed to host this *Hands on Desk*. I will prepare the mechanisms and details of this programme. Once implemented at Ayala Museum, I will share with the BM ITP network.



▪ **Collections Access-Objects in Focus** (inspired by The British Museum)

I thoroughly enjoyed the *Objects in Focus Programme* of the ITP. While the time available to prepare posed a major challenge, it enabled me to work with care and respect for my mentor, Dr. Gareth Brereton, Curator of Ancient Mesopotamia, Department of Middle East, and work closely with my ITP colleague Diana Digna (Sudan). I am grateful to Dr. Brereton for his thorough guidance, very supportive attitude, and he always made himself accessible through email. He provided extensive reading materials that aided me in understanding and learning more about the beautiful *funerary headdress* from the ancient City of Ur, Mesopotamia, that I knew nothing about at all. Discussions with him about the composition of the text and directions were very engaging, interesting, stimulating, and informative, making it more palatable to

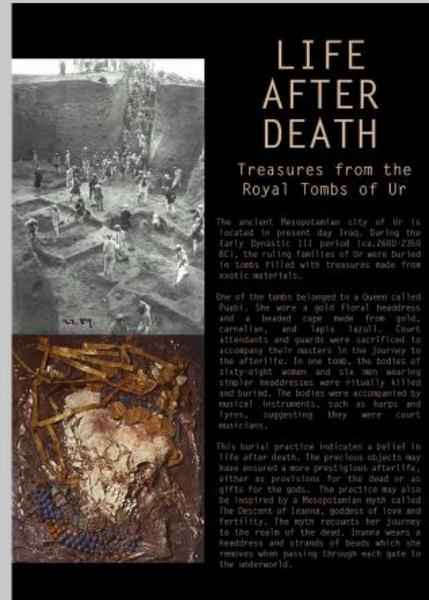
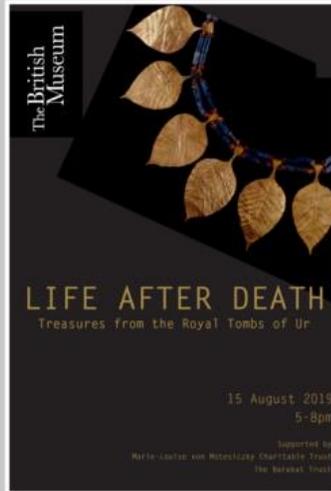
digest the data on hand and helped me connect the object with the theme of “Journeys”.

I am grateful for the opportunity to write the panel text and the label, reviewed and edited by my mentor. I like writing. This opportunity made me discover again my skills in writing exhibition texts. The experience at the reception on 15 August, coupled with the feeling of accomplishment, made all the hard work more meaningful. The process of explaining the importance of the object and its connection to the theme to all the interested guests who approached our presentation enhanced the learning process and experience for Diana and myself.

The opportunity as well to meet again Frances Carey, Chair of the MLvM Charitable Trust, and present to her my *Object in Focus* made me proud of my team’s effort and accomplishment.



Objects in Focus

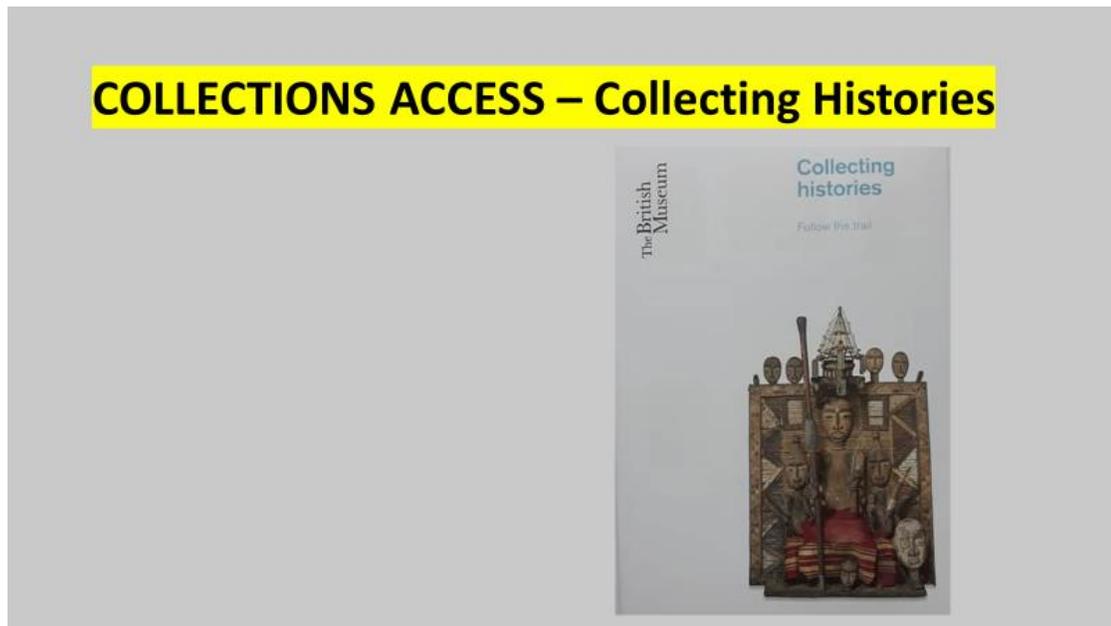


Objects in Focus



Inspired by this activity, I made a proposal to adopt this idea as well in our aim to further provide a platform for engagement with the collections and offer the museum staff access to the collection, many of which are in storage most of the time. In addition, this serves as a platform to encourage creativity, collaboration, and research. This may soon be a source of new directions or possible themes for future exhibitions. This will be implemented in 2020 when Ayala Museum re-opens to the public.

- **Collections Access-Collecting Histories** (inspired by The British Museum)



The **Collecting Histories** brochure at the BM inspired me to create a similar copy to feature selected artworks and objects from the Ayala Museum collection on permanent exhibition. The objects will be selected based on a theme. I am looking at preparing at least four sets of brochures, one for each quarter. The aim of this is to share more information on how the object came to the Ayala Museum's collection and what is its importance. This is also one way of serving as a guide for guests as gateway objects to appreciating the collection in the context of the display where it is featured. Further, this is another way of providing additional reference material that guests can take away, albeit very simple, and will serve as a "souvenir" as well. I aim to collaborate with our Education team in implementing this as well in 2020.

- **Core Museum Skills Training Programme**

(inspired by Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums)

I am inspired by the **Core Museum Skills Programme** at TWAM, organised by Jackie Bland, Training and Governance Officer at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum (TWAM). Based on discussions with Ms. Bland, her format is like the training programmes I have initiated under the *Monday Studies Programme* (this will be discussed towards the end of my report). However, her platform is more organised, focused, and has a regular programming. I plan to resurrect the Museum Training Programme for Ayala Museum staff and base this on TWAM's training programme.

▪ Hadrian's Wall (UK Partner Placement)

My placement went without complications, despite brooding weather. All arrangements were efficiently and effectively managed by Jackie Bland of TWAM. I am grateful to her and Iain Watson, TWAM Director, who made time to sit with us to listen and discuss what my ITP colleagues and I learned from the placement.

I have never heard of Hadrian's Wall in my entire life. I only saw Hadrian's Wall in my ITP programme. The fourth day in my partner placement in Newcastle was my introduction to this famous wall. I shared my thoughts on this in my write-up for ITP blog <https://bmitpglobalnetwork.org/2019/08/09/my-fourth-day-in-newcastle-an-introduction-to-hadrians-wall-aprille-tijam-ity-2019-philippines/>

The experience at Hadrian's Wall made a huge impact on me on its importance, how it now provides anchor for heritage preservation programs, museum programming, and audience appreciation (both for locals and foreigners like myself). I am grateful for the opportunity to learn about the wall with enthusiastic ITP colleagues Ciprian Dobra (Romania), Jasmine Qiao (China), and Jacob Nii Marley (Ghana), and from respected archaeologists Tony Wilmott and Bill Griffiths, who both generously made time to give us an extensive tour of Birdoswald Roman Fort and Cawfields Milecastle in Northumberland. Further, it gave me the opportunity to see, experience, and enjoy the beauty of the countryside— what they refer to as the “real British experience”, outside of London. The experience of enjoying the beauty of nature was so peaceful, refreshing, and calming.



Legacy Projects

As part of my interest in making some valuable contributions to The British Museum, I aim to conduct the following projects in the years to come –

▪ **Philippine Collections at the Department of Asia, The British Museum**

I have spoken to and will collaborate with Dr. Alexandra Green, Henry Ginsburg Curator for Southeast Asia, in collecting more data and information on the more than 1,300 Philippine objects in the BM Collection. I hope to become a conduit in sourcing data and identification of objects as the BM and Ayala Museum have similar objects in the collections, recommend Philippine publications for the Department's procurement and reference, contact experts on Philippine material culture for networking who, eventually, may collaborate or connect with Dr. Green for future programmes related to the Philippine collection at the BM.

One initial reference I shared with Dr. Green was a *Collections Corner* research on an axe from the Ayala Museum Collection. The BM has a similar object with registration number As1914,0514.1. I initiated the *Collections Corner* research at Ayala Museum in 2013. A copy of the publication was endorsed to Dr. Green as an initial reference.

COLLECTIONS CORNER



E-77-219
ALAWI
AX
Bontoc, Mountain Province
45.3 x 30 cm.
Ayala Museum Collection



E-77-220
ALAWI
AX
Bontoc, Mountain Province
45.5 x 28.7 cm.
Ayala Museum Collection

During the American period, the entire Cordillera area was designated as the Mountain Province. In 1967, the old Mountain Province was converted into four independent provinces, namely: Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga-Apayao, and Mountain Province. Bontoc is now the capital of the Mountain Province, one of the six provinces (together with Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga) in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) declared in 1987. Bontoc comes from the word "bundok", meaning mountain.

Acquired by Ayala Museum in 1977, these head axes or hatchets from Bontoc have witnessed warfare between two villages or *ili*, or feuding within an *ili*. In *In the Shape of Tradition: Indigenous Art of the Northern Philippines*, Eric Moltzau Anderson cites Richard Von Drasche's description of its shape as locally called *ligua* or *lwa* from a town called Beligua. These hatchets were carried by men inserted into their waistcloth. The cutting blade was specifically designed to sever a head, with the spike on one side used to pick up and puncture the severed head to drain blood.

June Prill-Brett, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at UP Baguio, cites Albert Jenks that *enfoloknit* is the Bontoc term for war and *momaka* means to take head. It was their custom then to cut the head of an adversary using the ax or hatchet and take it home as a trophy. In nearby Lias village, the trophies are displayed in their traditional *kag-aya* or victory celebration. The *kag-aya* last for days with no one allowed to work, hunt, or gather firewood. Luis Talastas in his essay "The Battle of Lias: Resistance in Eastern Mountain Province" describes this as a special *tongaw* (stay home). Talastas cites, "the ordinary *tongaw* means staying home to rest when one gets tired after working hard for days on end, while the special *tongaw* is done during religious ritual and festivals, when all members of the family or the whole community, depending on the kind of custom being observed, must stay home because working on the fields or going outside the *ili* is strictly prohibited." It was practiced in some areas in Northern Philippines that the severed head was buried under the house of the headhunter. Others exhumed and clean it to use as a trophy.

Prill-Brett enumerates the following six causes of warfare in Bontoc: [1] boundary dispute in relation to water rights, hunting grounds, or pasture lands; [2] encroachment and extraction of village resources without permission; [3] retaliation for a killing or series of killings by members of another village; [4] spilling of blood within the host village when visitors (from another village) are killed or wounded by enemies of the visitor's village, who happened to also be a visitor; [5] pollution of one's territory by trespassing; and [6] a condition where one party to a peace pact has been weak in enforcing the conditions of the peace pact contract, at the expense of the co-pact village. Together with other implements of war from the museum's collection, these head axes or hatchets were presented in a special feature exhibition at the Ground Floor Gallery during Ayala Museum's *Midnight Museum: Quest for Heroes, an epic pre-colonial mystery adventure* on October 27, 2017.

Research by APRILE R. TIAM, 2015.
Photograph by Jaime Martin. 2016.

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Tolentino, Delfin Jr., editor. *Resistance and Revolution in the Cordillera*. University of the Philippines College Baguio and National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 1984.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_Province. 18 Apr 2019.

Exchange of information was initially done during a site visit to Blythe House—three Philippine textiles—a *malong*, *Piña* (pineapple) male shirt, and a woman's blouse from Mindanao—were taken out of storage. Identification, functions, and designs were discussed with Dr. Green and ITP colleagues. The feature on the *Art of the Malong* in the Google Fashion Project was shared as well with Dr. Green-
<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/owKCDBBzFibtIq>

Legacy Projects at BM



- **Fernando Zobel Collection of prints and drawings**
at the Department of Prints and Drawings, The British Museum

Ayala Museum was conceptualised by the Filipino-Spanish abstract artist Fernando Zobel (1924-1984). However, it was not established until 1974, when Mr. Zobel was already residing in Cuenca, Spain, where he established the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in 1966. Mr. Zobel is represented in the BM Department of Prints and Drawings. He made donations of his prints and drawings to the BM in the 1970s. To my surprise, this was made known to me by Frances Carey, upon receipt of the book *Fernando Zobel. Contrapuntos*, an exhibition catalogue documenting the exhibition presented as one of the 22 *Collateral Events* of the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017. Ms. Carey personally met Mr. Zobel in the 1970s. Mr. Zobel's works form the core collection of Ayala Museum.

Legacy Projects at BM- Fernando Zobel



As part of my continuing research on Mr. Zobel—his life and works—I aim to continue to catalogue, research, and study the remaining 58 prints and drawings in the BM collection (there are total 71, according to the BM’s online database). I had the opportunity to look at and study 13 prints and drawings only last August 14, 2019, upon the recommendation of Ms. Carey. I will source funding to return to BM-Department of Prints and Drawings for this project.

• British Museum ITP Blogs

I aim to continue to submit contributions to the ITP Blog. I believe that this is one way to get across and share with the entire ITP network the programmes I am involved with and the skills I have applied from the ITP courses.

Legacy Projects at BM



First Week at the British Museum (Aprille Tijam, ITP 2019, Philippines)

*Written by Aprille Tijam, Senior Manager, Exhibitions and Collections, Ayala Museum (ITP 2019, Philippines) In 2018, I chanced upon the BBC-published book *The Museum: Behind the Scenes* at...*



My Fourth Day in Newcastle: An Introduction to Hadrian's Wall (Aprille Tijam, ITP 2019, Philippines)

Written by Aprille Tijam, Senior Manager, Exhibitions and Collections, Ayala Museum (ITP 2019, Philippines) The weather in Newcastle has been kind to me and my ITP colleagues Ciprian...

ITP blog

▪ **Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University – Philippine Ethnographic Collection**

During the ITP's day visit to Oxford, I had the opportunity to meet Meghan O'Brien Backhouse, Deputy Head of Collections, and Marina de Alarcon, Curator and Joint Head of Collections, both from the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. I enthusiastically discussed the possibility of being able to assist identifying Philippine objects in their collection. They shared an 863-page object catalogue of their Philippine collection. I hope to work with them as well in identifying data, functions, origins, and designs in the years to come. This will also serve as reference for future possible researches and collaboration between our institutions.

▪ **Collaboration with The Philippine Embassy in London and The British Museum**

News of possible collaboration between the Philippine Embassy in London and the British Museum were shared with me by Stacy Garcia, Third Secretary and Vice Consul of the Philippine Embassy in London. She was in touch with Dr. Green of the Department of Asia, for a project being initiated by Dr. Green to touch base with Filipinos from the Cordillera region residing now in the UK and to work on Philippine objects from the Cordillera region currently in the BM collection. Ms. Garcia invited me to assist in any way I can with this project. I will continue to communicate with both to help in this endeavour.

▪ **Workshops in the Philippines by experts from the British Museum**

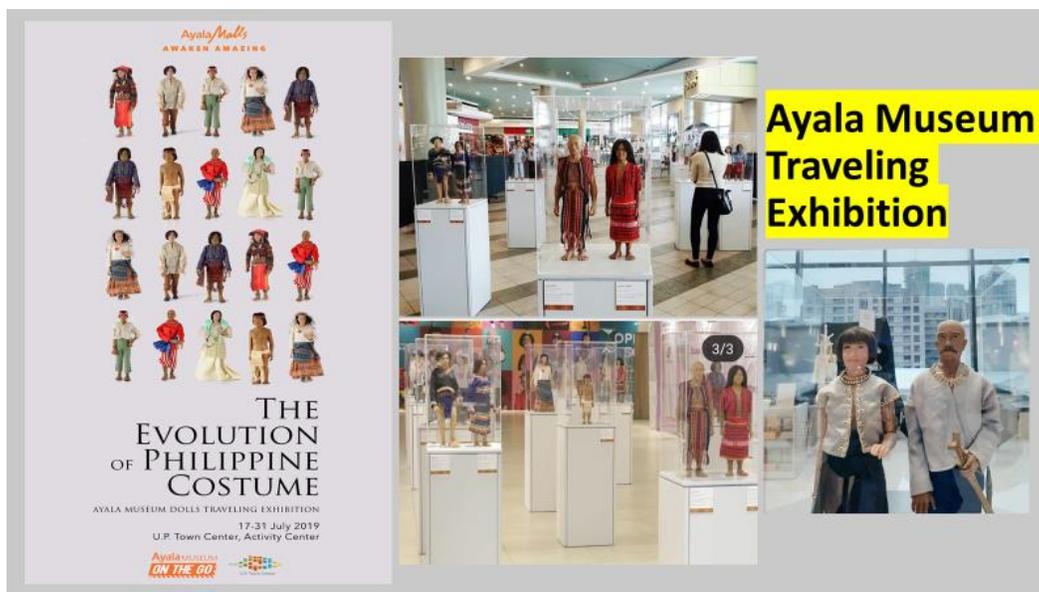
An initial conversation was made with John Williams, Head of Photography and Imagining at the BM, for a possible *Workshop on Photo-documentation of Museum Objects* in Manila. This is one aspect of museum work that has not been given focus on here in the country. The implementation will be aimed for after Ayala Museum re-opens in 2020. I will look into funding sources and arrangements for this proposal. Other topics of interest include Collections Care and Management, Preventive Conservation, Learning Programmes, Interpretation and Exhibition Design.

ITP+ Courses

I am most interested to take part in **ITP+ Courses** offering workshops and researches on **Textile Conservation, Collections Management, Preventive Conservation, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Trainings**. I am one of the custodians of more than 100 Philippine indigenous textiles collection of the Ayala Museum. In recent years, there have been no textile conservation courses offered here in the Philippines. It is of utmost importance to understand and learn more about textile conservation as a growing number of clothing traditions and textile-weaving practices in various indigenous groups have been lost.

Further, one of Ayala Museum's Traveling Exhibitions is **The Evolution of Philippine Costumes: Ayala Museum Doll Collection**, composed of hand-carved wooden dolls dressed in traditional costumes. The dolls were dressed in fabric, and textiles worn by these dolls were sewn and created in 1974 at the same time as the establishment of Ayala Museum. These dolls form part of the museum's collection.

In 2008, I am delighted to share that I spearheaded the conceptualisation and management of the **Ayala Museum Traveling Exhibition Programme**. At present, there are four exhibitions sets making the tour of the country. This is also another platform of making the museum's collection accessible to a greater public. It has travelled to more than 53 destinations nationwide, with more than 6 million viewers (as of 2017).



Monday Studies: Sharing *The British Experience* at Ayala Museum

In 2015, I conceptualised and implemented the *Monday Studies Programme*, aimed at continued capacity building for the Ayala Museum staff. It is a platform for knowledge sharing by colleagues who had the opportunity to attend training, seminars or workshops (both local and overseas), and Art Biennials. In addition, it is also a platform for training sessions on exhibition design, basic preventive conservation, or art handling. It is called *Monday Studies* as this is held only during Mondays, when Ayala Museum is closed to the public. This enables almost all the museum staff, service and security personnel, and interested Ayala Foundation staff to attend.

On October 17, I will be sharing my 2019 ITP experiences and key learnings through the **Monday Studies Session 19 - The British Experience** with my colleagues.



Continuing 2019 ITP Offsite Fellowship

I have gained new friends from 16 countries during the ITP Summer Programme. This means, I have acquired an extensive network in the global museum industry that will become a source of continued knowledge sharing, expertise, and exchanges in various aspects of museum practices.

At present, the continued exchanges are now taking place offsite ITP Programme. The following are the platforms—

- **WhatsApp Channel**, created by Nagwa Bakr (Egypt)

I recently proposed the concept of a continuing sharing programme inspired by a video shared by Alsu Akhmetzyanova (Uzbekistan) in the WhatsApp group and by Ioan Oprea

(Romania) who shared an image through Messenger of an *Orthodox Christian Iconostasis* (18th century) from his museum, the Muzeul National al Unirii Alba Iulia.



Orthodox Christian Iconostasis (18th century)

I proposed the sharing program –

Object in Focus + **Participant-Led Activities** = **2019 ITP Participants' Object in Focus**

For 1-2-minute video, colleagues may share the following –

- [1] any object from their museum collection and tell us in brief anything about it (purpose, who made it, why he/she likes it, or its importance in the museum or culture);
- [2] any exhibition you curated—a short tour or panning for us to view; and
- [3] any activity or work you are involved with or very important to you

This way, the ITP 2019 Fellows will continue the exchange of ideas, share more about their culture, and learn more from each other's experiences and programmes. It is also one way to tell the stories and listen to each other's voices (with videos shared), as if we were all still in sessions or just next door.

So far, colleagues from Egypt, Iraq, Kurdistan, Romania, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan have been sharing information through photos on their collection, exhibitions they have seen, trainings they will attend, and other cultural projects.

▪ **Messenger Channel**

Conversations are taking place in groups or individual links to include personal endeavours and museum work. This is encouraging questions and clarifying answers involving various topics.

▪ **Facebook and Instagram Channels**

With the advent of social media platforms, the Facebook pages are still seen as the most effective and popular way across the globe to share photos visualizing endeavours both

of personal and professional nature. From the time the 2019 ITP sessions were still ongoing at the BM and placement partners, the ITP fellows were already linked through Facebook and Instagram.

Further, I am not only linked with other 2019 ITP Fellows, but with other BM officers as well, mostly curators and volunteers I had the opportunity to collaborate with.

First time, but not the last time

It was my first time in the United Kingdom. I fell in love with London, its people, and all the countryside I had the opportunity to visit as part of the programme. I hope to return someday as an **ITP Senior Fellow** to learn more, share more.

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