

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME 2022 REPORT

My name is Kezia Permata, from Indonesia, and I have just finished my study in MA History of Art and Archaeology at SOAS University of London when I joined the British Museum International Training Programme 2022. Studying literature in my undergraduate, I never thought I would be interested in museology. I have always enjoyed visiting museums, and every time I would wonder what happened behind the displays, and how it came to be as it is seen by the visitors. Studies about collecting and displaying objects were discussed in some modules that I took in the major I was studying, but even then, I still had not considered in branching out a career in museums. In one of the modules however, I had the opportunity to curate with my groupmates our own mini-exhibition. The whole experience of curating was very new and exciting to me, which is why when I heard I could have a chance to learn from the real team of one of the most significant museums in the world, I could not miss it. Much thanks to the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme (SAAAP) SOAS and the International Training Programme team, I gained a place to be a part of the annual programme. For about four weeks, I was filled with new knowledge every day regarding the elements that are at work at the British Museum. Different representatives from various departments of the museum came and shared their experience and knowledge through presentations and answered our questions. Even more than that, I was surrounded by museum professionals as fellows, who all have their own experience in their respective organisations. Being a fresh graduate, I did not have much to bring to the table, but being with professionals did not discourage me, instead I saw it as an opportunity to see how my life could be if I work in different sections of a museum.



Figure 1 Not just as colleagues, but friendship also flourished during the training programme

One of the most exciting parts of the training required us to visit a partner museum outside of London for seven days and learn from the programme tailored for each of us. A fellow and I visited Norwich and were assigned to Sarah Gore, the Teaching Museum Manager at Norfolk Museum Services. During the week we were there, along with the trainees of the Teaching Museum Programme, we were given lessons about managing the Norfolk Museum Services and some chances to visit the museums ourselves. On one of the days, we went outside of the city and visited Cromer, a town on the north coast part of the county of Norfolk. The town is side-by-side with the sea and a lot of the history is related to the life of the seamen, which is reflected in the Cromer Museum where an interesting exhibition is also held. The exhibition, titled “Shaped by You” expected the participation of the visitors to give feedback help creating the upcoming exhibition, making the visitor’s voice as the main contributor of the exhibition, hence the name. At the RNLI Henry Blogg Museum we had a brainstorming session to come up with activity projects for the summer. The museum focuses on celebrating the RNLI and the life of Henry Blogg, a coxswain who alongside his crew, saved 873 lives, making him one of the greatest figures in the history of RNLI. The layout of the museum and a lot of the interactions inspired me so much, especially how the history-packed contents did not stop them from making the interactions enjoyable for families. We ended the day-trip by visiting Cromer Art Space and discussed about the future projects in the venue and got creative by making our own art works.



Figure 3 A poster in RNLI-Henry Blogg Museum, Cromer

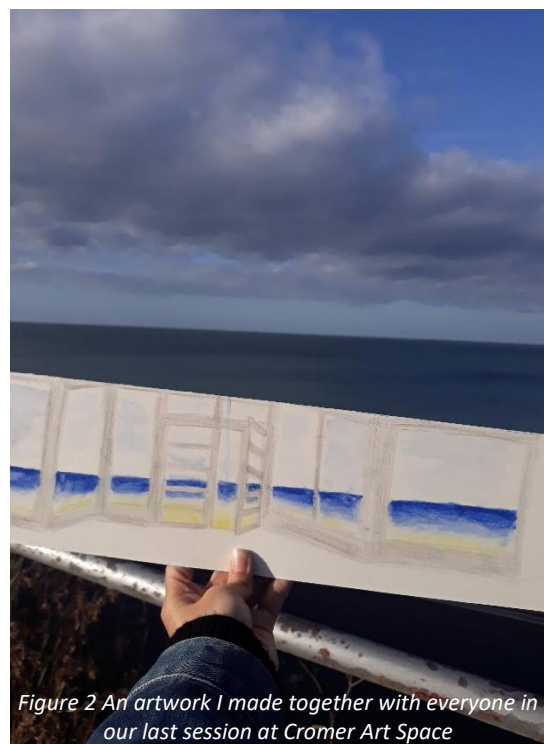


Figure 2 An artwork I made together with everyone in our last session at Cromer Art Space

On the day after the trip, we visited Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, where we spent the morning working with the conservator team cleaning some of the objects in the collection. I learnt how the different methods of conservation are applied during the cleaning process, and my favourite part was involving a freezer as a further prevention of pest infestation. What we had to do was to wrap the objects before putting them into the giant machine, and make sure that the temperature only exterminates the living creatures hidden inside the objects and not to damage the object itself. After the morning activity, we visited the Workhouse Museum. Inside the museum, the history was told in a very engaging way through the story-telling of actual people who lived in the workhouse back in the day. In the afternoon we had a session with the Learning Department, and how they used role-play to demonstrate the scenarios of the people who lived in the workhouse. Every part of the demonstration was customised according to various age groups. This part of the session reminded me of my days in the Sunday School Department back when I was in Indonesia, and how important engagement is when it comes to teaching school children. This also encouraged me to look more into the learning department in a museum and how I can develop my potential when one day I become a part of an institution.



Figure 4 With some fellows from the Norfolk Teaching Museum Programme and the Learning Department of the Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse

This whole experience has opened my eyes to seeing how every element in a museum plays a significant role. There is so much more than what meets the eye of a visitor, and being in the training programme, I got to taste a little bit of what it would be like being a part of a museum. Just last year, I did not expect myself to seriously think about having a career in a museum, but this programme has made me realise an excitement I never knew existed within me. It made me want to dig further into my potential and hopefully contribute to a museum someday. In addition to that, I gained a network I never imagined before. All the advice, both professionally and personally, is very precious to my growth, and when I finally become a part of an institution, I hope to keep the connection intact as the field has much more to explore in collaboration. Finally, since the programme is generously sponsored, I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust for making my experience happen, as well as the International Training Programme team and this year's Senior Fellow for organising the whole programme from beginning to end. I could never dream of walking behind the displays of the British Museum, let alone to learn so much from it. This will be a huge stepping stone for my career growth, and no words could express how grateful I am for everyone involved in making this come true. I wish the very best for the future of my ITP fellows and for the ITP, and may the programme continue to contribute to the world of museums globally.



Figure 5 All fellows after visiting Kenwood House and welcomed for warm afternoon tea session by Mrs Frances Carey at her house in the Heath