

Shahira Banu ITP Report

Over the course of four weeks, I gained an incredible wealth of knowledge, new skills and formed new friendships. I learned about the various departments and types of work that goes on behind the scenes of a museum such as the British Museum and the Norfolk Museums Services (NMS). The day trips and week-long attachment with a partner museum were very useful in providing a greater breadth of museum mechanisms and a chance to learn the varied approaches amongst UK museums. I appreciated this because it gave me a chance to understand how regional museums or university museums function and approach projects.



The Singh Twins: Slaves of Fashion Exhibition we got a tour of in Norwich

As a student who has yet to gain much work experience in a museum space, being on the ITP was a golden opportunity that gave me a chance to be introduced to and involved in various aspects of a museum. I have viewed the museum from a visitor's perspective for most part of my life. Hence, learning about and experiencing what goes on behind the scenes allowed me to understand the immense amount of work and connections between the various departments within a museum.

A key takeaway for me personally was the increased understanding of the different departments such as interpretation, learning, accessibility, and community engagement. This was a major gain for me because now I am aware of the different paths within the arts, heritage, and museum sector I can pursue career wise. During the programme, I got to interact with so many people and this allowed me to understand different museum careers and learn from their personal stories. Hence, beyond just knowing about the departments they are in, I got to know the people who are involved in the teams too. I am confident that in the future, I would be able to contribute from what I have learned to the institution I work in.

Spending time with curators of the various departments gave me valuable information as well – including on future projects, ways in which projects are proposed, brainstormed etc. I appreciated the curator-led tours because it was so engaging. It was amazing to gain access to the 'behind the scenes' of it all. The Henry Ginsburg Curator for Southeast Asia, Dr Alexandra Green, walked us through how databases are managed and updated. In the near

future, as I would be pursuing an internship in another museum, I can see myself applying what I learned about databases for instance.

She also showed us the stores with Southeast Asian artefacts, and this was really interesting because it gave a preview of what kind of artefacts I would be able to see in her upcoming book. It was of course a privilege to see artefacts from the region I am from. We also had a day each with Dr Sushma Jansari, Tabor Foundation Curator: South Asia Collections, and Emily Hannam, Project Curator: South Asia. With Dr Sushma, it was the first time I had seen the stores of a museum. The importance of doing the work in naming, cataloguing and categorising objects - especially in a museum like the British Museum where there is a vast quantity - was valuable because it gave me an idea of how objects are utilised - whether they go on display, or are loaned out or are used for research while in the stores. With Emily, I thoroughly enjoyed the sharing on the project with Manchester that is set to be unveiled soon. This is definitely something I hope to do in my career at some point as well - to co-create and curate with communities. Learning about how the team had to be adaptable during the pandemic also highlighted the importance of being flexible, forming strong bonds despite adversities and being resourceful. What truly stood out to me was the importance in sharing the heritage of people, presenting stories of and for the people.

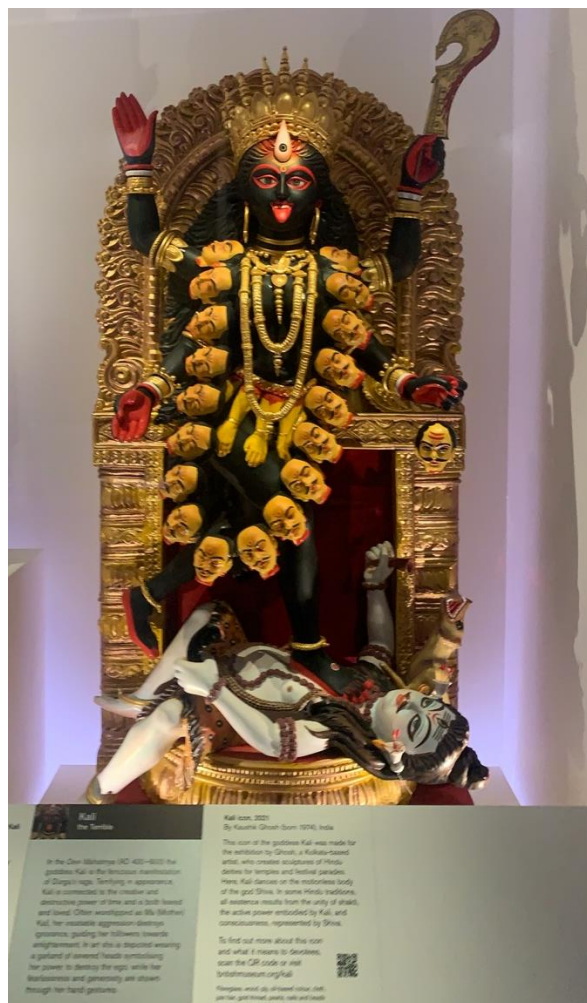


Image of Kali, commissioned for the Feminine Power Exhibition

A major learning opportunity was the week spent in Norwich. During the course of the week, I met other trainees who were at NMS and learned with and from them. This week provided some wonderful hands-on training such as a mock exercise in planning an event, brainstorming ideas for summer activities for one of the museums, cleaning and packing artefacts. The idea of museums and their content connecting with the people and being used as a space to serve the communities is something I hope to bring to whatever institution I work with in the future.

Learning about accessible storage at Norwich was something I really liked. Beyond the museum and displayed artefacts connecting with people, utilising what is in the storage as a space for people to visit and learn from is appealing and I think it is not something done widely just yet. Time spent at the partner museum gave me a greater understanding of regional museums and the differences between regional and national museums. Learning how loans and collaborations work across museums in the UK and globally through the various presentations by the museum professionals highlighted the importance of a global network. This made me realise just how valuable the ITP is because we get to learn from so many different museum professionals. Furthermore, the continued relationships beyond the programme, thanks to the efforts of the ITP team, is an asset as well. Whether possible collaborations in the future or learning through the weekly e-mails sent by Claire - there are platforms for sustained relationships in place.



A sunset in Norwich

Following the completion of the programme, I am even more interested in pursuing a career in the heritage, arts, and museum sectors in the future. I am more curious and intrigued now

than ever before about the various roles and duties within the museum space. It is great to also view and appreciate exhibitions with the newfound information such as a project curator's role, how loans work, the process of interpretation and marketing that goes into it. Being on this programme was a fortune. I learned so much and had the time to reflect on it thus far. I know that there is a wealth of knowledge gained that I could contribute to an institution in the future. I hope to pursue projects that work with engaging communities in museum spaces whether it is for exhibitions or events within a museum, making sure it is an accessible and welcoming environment for people. For now, I hope to read up more and perhaps contribute to the ITP global network through interesting articles or opportunities I see - inspired by the weekly email from the ITP team.

Learning about stories of objects and communities inspired me to wonder about the tales of the object I selected for the Objects in focus trail. It was a great chance to explore what the collections had that connected to the theme of food and drink - whether it was by wandering around the museum space or by going through the collections online. I enjoyed learning about not only the object I had selected but learning from the other ITP fellows on their objects, why they chose it and so on.

Much like how food and drinks bring people together, I think the ITP was an opportunity that fed our minds and brought people from all over the world together. This opportunity of a lifetime for me would not have been possible without the Marie Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust's sponsorship.

To the ITP team, needless to say, the programme would not have happened without your incredible efforts so I do not know how to express my gratitude for that but thank you so, so much, because without your efforts, I would not have been able to have had the chance to learn all that I did in four weeks!

To Claire, Anna, George and ITP's Senior Fellow 2022 Roshan - Thank you for your patience, guidance and care! From planning the logistics, checking in on us and guiding us during the programme, this programme most definitely would not be the same without each of you!

To Sarah Gore, Teaching Museum Manager of Norfolk Museums Services - I am so grateful for your warm welcoming of us and for providing the chance to learn about and from the museums in the fine city of Norwich. Visiting spaces like Gressenhall, having a chance at hands-on activities, learning about the plans NMS has for the future and more was such an incredible delight!

To the ITP Fellows, it was a pleasure meeting you all! From learning together, spending time together whether it was during breakfast or while having conversations about all sorts of topics from pop culture to careers - it was a delightful four weeks spent with you all!

Thank you, ITP 2022!



Image of myself and Beatrice holding (empty!) cups near the wine-cups I had presented on for the Object in focus trail project