

British Museum - International Training Programme

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Final Report

Introduction

The International Training Programme (ITP) at the British Museum was, without doubt, the highlight of my professional year in 2025. It was an experience that not only strengthened my career but also shaped the way I now imagine museums in Latin America. This report is structured into three main parts: first, the impact of the programme on my professional practice and institution; second, the reflections on my personal journey and encounters during the ITP; and finally, words of gratitude to the people and institutions that made this experience possible.



Momentum for change

The ITP experience has profoundly strengthened my ambition to help build better institutions in Latin America. It gave me renewed momentum and the opportunity to establish strong professional relationships with colleagues at the Santo Domingo Centre of Excellence for Latin American Research (SDCELAR) and the Americas Department of the British Museum. These connections are not only valuable in themselves; they have become catalysts for imagining collaborative futures.

The programme also offered invaluable insights into how peer institutions communicate the world's heritage. Witnessing the methodologies developed at Glasgow Museums, especially in community engagement and storytelling, was both inspiring and transformative.

I now stand before a new challenge in my career: planning a museum in the heart of the Colombian coffee lands. The perspectives and skills I gained during the ITP will directly inform this project, shaping the way I envision participation, accessibility, and narrative.

Yet Colombian museums face persistent barriers: a lack of accountability and the entrenched belief that heritage belongs only to a narrow circle of specialists. Many Colombians still feel that museums 'are not for them.' To change this, institutions must move beyond the limits of exhibition halls and create new relationships with audiences, ensuring that memory is preserved as something living and shared.

One of the most urgent changes I hope to promote is a new understanding of material culture, not as something reserved for scholars and professionals, but as a resource for all. Visits to facilities in London and Glasgow (the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection, the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, the British Library, and V&A East Storehouse) revealed that heritage cannot, and should not, remain hidden in inaccessible storerooms.



Libraries and visitable storages, with their culture of openness, became a model for me: they reach people with all the resources they hold. I want museums in Colombia to learn from this practice, moving beyond elitist traditions and embracing transparency and accessibility as guiding values.

Sharing time with colleagues from around the world also gave me perspective. Despite our different contexts, we face similar challenges: lack of accountability, scarce funding, and the need for creativity in response.

For me, the ITP is not only about what I learned in the UK, but also about the network I now belong to. I hope to continue deepening these professional relationships and collaborating to build stronger, more inclusive institutions. Linking my current museum projects in Colombia to the ITP global network is a goal I carry with me, even if its shape is not yet fully defined.

A very personal journey

Personally, I believe that I embarked on a journey obsessively searching for the idea of Latin America. During this ITP Programme, and throughout my trip to the UK, I learned many things from the everyday lives of fellow Colombians living and working there. For instance, Rafaela, the six-year-old daughter of my dear friends Maybel and Nelson, taught me through her words the meaning of being born in another latitude and yet still being able to speak the language of her parents and grandparents, one of the privileges that life can offer to a Latin American immigrant.



I feel that I searched for the Americas, with obsession, in every visit to those ‘museum temples’ that are on their way to becoming less ‘sacred’ in order to remain relevant. I ate and shared with people from this side of the world, my southern side of the world, that wakes up every morning in the global north, striving to make our memories and our ways of seeing visible. I visited coffee and banana plantations that had been ‘transplanted’ (going back and forth across continents), and I gazed at the painful memory of rubber, sugarcane, and cocoa plantations, which I consider more than just staple crops in our collective memory.

I ask myself whether it is worth denying material culture, and therefore cultural heritage, to the hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans who may never return to live either here or there. We do not know where we will be today or tomorrow, but objects can serve as reminders of where we came from.

I believe I managed to find Latin America, alive and explosive as always, trying to adapt to the vertiginous pace of our times. I felt that in the air one could almost see St. Elmo's fire, a good omen for navigating troubled waters, and my new friends working in these British institutions are truly [explorers and discoverers] of our legacies in that northern island, a land where one finds not only objects and memories, but also many people who care for them every single day, in the hope of their eventual return to the landscapes of their origin.

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This programme was not simply training; it was a journey, both professional and personal, that will continue to resonate in my work and in the institutions, I help to build in Colombia and beyond.