

20 Years of Impact: A Legacy of Partnership, Collaboration and Global Connection

Welcome to the International Training Programme (ITP) Newsletter 2026. This year marks a major milestone for the programme. As well as celebrating our 20th programme and our 20th anniversary, the British Museum is delighted that the ITP has attracted renewed major funding for a further five years, taking it up to 2030, with generous support from an anonymous donor.

For 20 years the British Museum and our UK Partner network have had the pleasure and privilege of providing colleagues from around the world with a forum for discussion and exchange through sharing our knowledge, collections and spaces. We are proud to mark two decades of empowering museum and heritage professionals worldwide through our annual training programme and a range of legacy projects.

What has made the ITP so special and so extraordinary, is our global network which currently stands at 393 fellows from 65 countries. While our fellows come from diverse institutions and backgrounds, all are passionate about international collaboration and through the lens of culture and heritage, friendships are formed, preconceptions are dispelled and lasting connections have been made.

Safoura Kalantari ,
Daniel Lira and
Li Yingchong
looking at
accessibility at the
British Museum.



The ITP Newsletter takes you on a global journey through different institutions, collections, staff and audiences. It focuses on how culture and heritage can provide a platform for new thinking, inviting challenging conversations and addressing current issues – both local and global. It tells our fellows' stories and is guided by the projects and programmes being delivered by our global network.

For our anniversary newsletter, the ITP team and our Senior Fellow 2025, Chantal Umuhoza, Curator, Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy (ITP 2018) asked our global network to help us celebrate the meaningful partnerships and collaborations that have grown out of their participation in the ITP.

In *Partnership and collaboration* we have invited our fellows to share their stories and experiences, highlighting how the ITP has supported them to create new connections which have inspired initiatives, and enabled collaboration with colleagues across geographical and cultural boundaries.

In *Your collection in focus* and *Global perspectives*, we have asked our network to reflect on how being part of an international community has improved their careers and been beneficial to their work and their institutions.

ITP memory... provides our network with a space to share their memories and experiences of the International Training Programme. And our *Bulletin board* and *Global network news* sections tell us more about what is happening in institutions around the world and detail our alumni's personal and professional updates.

Finally, the ITP team would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank to all our Museum colleagues and UK programme partners who have worked with us over 20 years. We'd also like to recognise the generous support of many institutions and individuals who have made the ITP such a successful global initiative and continue to secure its future.

I hope you enjoy learning more about our network's International Training Programme experiences and hearing how the ITP has impacted them and their careers in their own words.

Claire Messenger
International Training Programme Manager
British Museum

Collaboration in action!!

Participating in the ITP programme has been transformative for my professional journey. Although I am a practicing curator, I did not initially have a formal background in museum studies. The ITP programme significantly strengthened my curatorial skills and theoretical foundation, helping me bridge this gap and approach my work with greater confidence, critical thinking, and international standards.

Beyond skills development, the ITP shaped my career by introducing me to a global network of museum and heritage professionals. This international exposure created opportunities for meaningful cross-border collaboration and peer learning.

In 2022, I had the opportunity to collaborate with two other ITP Fellows, Lydia Nafula from Kenya (ITP Fellow 2008) and Shadia Abdu Rabo from Sudan (ITP Fellow 2006), on the Dolls of Good Hope Exhibition. This international exhibition was funded by DAAD through TheMuseumsLab and brought together museum and cultural professionals from different parts of the world.

The Dolls of Good Hope Exhibition was hosted at the Nairobi National Museum (NNM) from September 2023 to January 2024. Then at the Nairobi Gallery from February to May 2024. The Dolls of Good Hope Exhibition showcased the uniqueness of the culture associated with dolls. For many people dolls are thought of as toys but they also have many ritual roles in

communities across Africa and the world at large. There is also a lot of skill and creativity that goes into making these dolls, and a diversity of materials and techniques that are used.

The exhibition covered dolls from the 4 regions of Africa, that is West represented by Ghana, North represented by Egypt and Sudan, East represented by Kenya and Southern Africa represented by Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Namibia. While the European continent was represented by Germany. The exhibition featured Fertility, Rainmaking, Remembrance, Healing, Harvest, Straw, and Nativity Dolls.

Working within this diverse, cross-cultural team enabled rich exchanges on regional perspectives, curatorial approaches, and institutional practices. The collaboration strengthened my experience in international exhibition-making, encouraged dialogue across borders, and highlighted the value of shared knowledge in addressing common social and cultural themes. The relationships built through ITP continue to influence my work and have laid a strong foundation for future international collaborations within the museum and cultural heritage sector.

Chantal Umuhoza
Curator
Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy
Rwanda, ITP Fellow 2018 & Senior Fellow 2025



Left to right:
Chantal Umuhoza,
Shadia Abdu
Rabo, Lydia
Nafula.

20 years of the ITP annual programme

While the International Training Programme has strived to evolve and develop over the past 20-years, the ITP annual programme has remained at its core. The six-week summer programme is the unifying experience which all new members of the ITP global network take part in. It introduces new fellows to the British Museum and our partner institutions around the UK, and allows them to meet a cohort of new colleagues and friends from around the world. Partnerships we hope will continue well beyond their annual programme experience.

Many aspects of the ITP annual programme have remained the same over the past 20-years. All ITP alumni will instantly recognise the entrance to Schafer House, the University College London accommodation which has been home to ITP fellows in London since 2006! All will have spent time at a UK partner museum during their time on the ITP. These venues have changed over the years, but all the participants have had the opportunity to explore a different UK institution, a different city and hear different perspectives on museum practice from what they learn at the British Museum. To date, 10 UK cities have been ITP UK partner placement venues.

But while some elements have remained constant, we have strived to continually improve the annual programme experience for our fellows. As the structure of the programme has developed, we have incorporated the concept of 'core museum skills' into the programme. These are the topics of museum practice we have identified as being important to cover for all the participants, despite their job roles or experience. These topics have included collections management, temporary exhibitions, permanent displays, conservation, and learning. The programme structure has led to the creation of an e-learning course on core museum skills on the ITP website for alumni to access year-round.



We've also attempted to make the annual programme more bespoke to the individual. Another element of more recent annual programmes is what we call 'subject specialist sessions.' These sessions enable fellows to work with colleagues who have similar projects, programmes and personal interests. In 1-to-1 sessions or in smaller groups, voices can be better heard and institutional challenges directly addressed.

From 2006 to 2025, 393 fellows from 65 countries have become part of the ITP global network. Coming from different countries and cultures, from different institutions and job profiles, the entire global network is connected by one shared experience: the ITP annual programme. As we continue to improve and evolve the annual programme to the needs of future cohorts, we hope the spirit of the annual programme will remain the same; to create global and meaningful connections, and to foster friendships and collaborations which will help shape the museums of the future.

George Peckham
International Training Programme Coordinator
(Annual Programme)
British Museum



A highlight of more recent annual programmes has been the Future of Museums workshop, which are led by the ITP Senior Fellow.

Core museum skills include sessions on collections management, where fellows can take part in hands-on workshops on object pinning, packing and condition checking.

Reimagining the British Museum: International Working Group



Since 2022, I have collaborated with the Reimagining the British Museum Programme, now called The Masterplan, as one of twelve fellows of the International Working Group (IWG), representing countries including Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, Ghana, India, Iraq, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Uganda. Most of these fellows are alumni of the British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP). Working alongside Julia Farley, Head of Masterplan Strategy, and Vikki Hawkins, Masterplan Curator, the Masterplan project is tasked with developing new curatorial approaches to interpreting the collection and exploring narratives that will underpin a comprehensive redisplay. The project also aims to enhance audience engagement with the cultural materials in the care of the British Museum.

The process involved creating briefs for future galleries, with the goal of presenting objects and stories spanning two million years of human history in ways that are more engaging and relevant to contemporary audiences. Throughout my participation, I had the opportunity to collaborate with a wide range of international museum practitioners—including directors, curators, conservators, educators, and project managers—each sharing a wealth of experience. I also connected with ITP fellows from different years, enriching the exchange of ideas.

During my overseas travels—whether for work or personal reasons—I made it a point to use these experiences as benchmarking opportunities to share during IWG sessions. This approach added another layer of purpose to my museum visits, allowing me to observe exhibition spaces, visitor flow, interpretive strategies, and didactic components more critically. I consistently asked myself: Is the museum and its spaces inclusive? Was I satisfied with my experience? What aspects would resonate with the British Museum's requirements? Did I fully understand the interpretation, particularly in places where I am not well-versed in the local history?

As an IWG fellow, I participated in online sessions and in-person workshops focused on themes organized by the RBM core group, helping to shape the narratives for the redevelopment of the West Wing. During the onsite session in 2025, the fellows engaged in an hour-long dialogue with Nicholas Cullinan, Director, and Lina Ghotmeh, the architect tasked with redesigning the galleries using her archaeological approach.

Aprille Tijam
Associate Director and Head of Exhibitions and Collections
Ayala Museum
Philippines, ITP Fellow 2019

The International Working Group (IWG) at the British Museum in October 2025.

From a Message to a Global Stage: Collaboration Through the ITP Network

As alumni of the International Training Programme (ITP) at the British Museum in 2019, we continue to experience the lasting value of the professional relationships and collaborative mindset fostered during the programme. Years after completing the ITP, these connections remain active, meaningful, and capable of generating new opportunities for international cooperation.

In early 2024, a message from fellow ITP alumna Vishi Upadhyay (ITP 2019, Bihar Museum, India) sparked the idea of co-convening an academic session at the World Archaeological Congress-10 (WAC10), held in Darwin, Australia, in June 2025. What began as a simple exchange between two former ITP fellows soon developed into a collaborative international project that brought together researchers, institutions, and perspectives from different parts of the world.

Working alongside Dr. Arjun R. from the Central University of Karnataka, we jointly developed a session proposal titled “From Megaliths to Memorial Stones: Commemorative Archaeology, Museums and Heritage Conservation.” The session explored themes of memorial landscapes, megalithic traditions, ethnographic research, and the evolving role of museums in conserving and interpreting cultural memory. Following its acceptance, the call for papers received strong international interest, resulting in nineteen selected contributions from India, Egypt, Ghana, and Sri Lanka.

Although we participated online due to travel constraints, the session was highly engaging and fostered rich dialogue among archaeologists and museologists. Discussions extended beyond individual case studies to reflect on how collaboration across borders strengthens research, enriches museum practice, and supports more inclusive approaches to heritage conservation.

This experience demonstrated the long-term impact of the ITP network. Relationships formed during the programme continue to shape our professional practice, enabling collaboration years later and on a global scale.



Vishi Upadhyay
Curator
Bihar Museum
India, ITP Fellow 2019

Nagwa Bakr
Director, Training Department
National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC)
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2019



Conference logo.

Audience at WAC 10.

Reflecting on my ITP experience

In 2008, I participated in the International Training Programme (ITP) at the British Museum. As a staff member of the Beijing Capital Museum's Social Education Department at the time, the programme allowed me to comprehensively study the museum's operations—from marketing and exhibition design to education, archaeology, and conservation—through gallery visits, forums, and dedicated sessions in the Asia Department.

For a newcomer with only one year of museum experience, ITP offered an invaluable high starting point. It moved me beyond textual research—my background was in world history—and brought me face-to-face with material evidence of ancient civilizations, profoundly deepening my historical understanding. More importantly, I learned how museums communicate with audiences through objects, curation, and educational storytelling.

Upon returning, I applied this knowledge to practical museum work and was soon transferred to the Exhibition Department. The skills, cross-cultural communication abilities, and attention to detail that I gained from the ITP enabled me to take on key responsibilities—from hosting diplomatic visits during the Olympics to curating exhibitions. In 2010, at an ITP global networking event held in Cairo, I connected with professionals Li Zhongmou (ITP 2006) and Sun Miao (ITP 2007), who later recommended me to the Palace Museum in 2015, where I further advanced my curatorial career.

To date, I have curated over 20 large-scale exhibitions, including collaborations with international museums.

In 2023, I was promoted to Research Fellow in Exhibition Studies. That same year, through my ITP network, I joined the International Working Group for Reimagining the British Museum, now called the Masterplan, contributing to its long-term renovation plans.

ITP has been crucial to my professional growth, expanding my vision, providing essential skills, and opening doors to global collaboration—fundamentally shaping my path as a curator.

Haikun Bo
Curator
The Palace Museum
China, ITP Fellow 2008



Top left: Storage tours during the 2008 ITP Annual Programme.

Top right: ITP+ course on temporary exhibitions and permanent displays (2017).

Bottom: The International Working Group with Nicholas Cullinan, Director.

Starting local, thinking global: my collaboration journey at the National Museum Birnin Kudu

When people talk about international collaboration, it often sounds like something that begins far away. My experience has shown me the opposite: meaningful global connections often start at home.

Since taking up my role as Curator of the National Museum Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State, northwest Nigeria, I have focused on building partnerships that go beyond cultural and geographical boundaries, beginning with the communities that surround and shape our museum.

The National Museum Birnin Kudu is an ethnographic museum and also serves as the Rock Art Interpretation Centre. It holds a unique place as the only Rock Art centre in West Africa, attracting interest from researchers, heritage professionals, and visitors from different parts of the world. This special status encouraged me to think more intentionally about how we tell our stories and who is involved in telling them.

One of my first initiatives was to engage traditional institutions across Jigawa State. I paid courtesy and working visits to the five first-class emirate councils of Dutse, Kazaure, Gumel, Ringim, and Hadejia, as well as our host community in Birnin Kudu, led by the Sarkin

Kudu. These visits were not just formalities; they were conversations about how their tangible and intangible heritages can be showcased.

From these engagements, a shared idea emerged: to establish dedicated exhibition galleries at the museum, each telling the story of an emirate, its people, history, and cultural heritage. These galleries are designed to speak not only to local visitors, but also to audiences from beyond Nigeria, offering authentic, community-driven narratives.

We have already completed a permanent gallery for the Birnin Kudu Chieftdom, and work is ongoing on galleries for the remaining emirates. Each step has strengthened relationships and deepened trust.

This journey has been a memorable reminder that collaboration does not always begin across borders. By building strong partnerships beyond cultural boundaries at the local level, we are opening doors for international exchange, dialogue, and future collaboration ensuring that the stories of Birnin Kudu resonate far beyond our region.

Ishaq Mohammed Bello
Assistant Chief Technical Officer
National Musuem Kaduna
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2012



Ishaq Mohammad Bello conducting visits to local community groups.

Museum Exchanges

Museum loans, the practice of loaning cultural material to another museum for temporary exhibits, have formed the foundation of my collaborative partnership with the British Museum following the completion of the ITP Fellowship in 2023. While exhibitions often take centre stage, the loan process itself is frequently overlooked as a critical component of museum work. Requesting and approving loans requires sustained cooperation among multiple departments at both the lending and borrowing institutions, including registration, conservation, and collections management, to research, approve, pack and unpack, document, check the condition of, and install objects.

In the past two years, the British Museum and the Bishop Museum have each organised reciprocal loans. As a collection manager, I had the opportunity to experience the loan process from both perspectives. In 2024, Bishop Museum borrowed objects from the British Museum for the groundbreaking exhibition *Ka Ula Wena: Oceanic Red*. The following year, the British Museum borrowed three objects from the Bishop Museum's collection for its exhibition *Hawai'i: A Kingdom Crossing Oceans*.

Packing and crating loans involves careful consideration of movement and environment. Objects selected to travel between London and Honolulu undergo a multistep approval process to ensure that they are safe to travel, in terms of provenance and material stability. During transit, crates cross ten time zones and pass through three drastically different climates before reaching the borrowing institution, nearly halfway around the world. Given these conditions, maintaining rigorous collection care standards is essential.

Collaboration is fundamental to successful exchanges, and for couriers and collections staff managing incoming loans, clear communication is critical. However, not all communication is verbal. A more nuanced form of collaboration is embedded within the crate itself, wedged into the foam that protects its contents. Museums communicate extensively through packing systems: diagrams, notes, numbered foam layers, and detailed instructions. Crates often contain highly specific systems designed to secure multiple components precisely. Without clear guidance on how to remove and replace foam sections or screws, the borrowing institution may be unable to repack an object exactly as it arrived, which can lead to potential damage during return transit.



The registration, conservation, and collections departments at the British Museum demonstrated exceptional care in packing the loans for *Ka Ula Wena*. The objects arrived in pristine condition. The crates were waterproofed with Marvelseal, insulated, and lined with carefully cut foam, while internal boxes were meticulously constructed to house their important cargo. Bishop Museum staff was particularly inspired by the packing of one object: a 'umeke ki'i (British Museum Oc,HAW.47), a wooden image carved with a bowl on each side. The top of the ki'i retained delicate remnants of feather and hair from what was once a full head. The object was supported by custom-carved foam layers that stabilised the form while avoiding any pressure on these fragile elements during transit.

Once a crate arrives at an institution after travel, allowing sufficient time for environmental acclimatization is essential. This consideration was especially important for the Bishop Museum's loan to the British Museum: a wax bust of Kamehameha II (Bishop Museum 08052), believed to have been created posthumously following his trip to London in 1824. Bishop Museum staff were concerned about the effects of transporting wax from a tropical climate through multiple environments, including the extreme cold of air travel. To mitigate risk, the collections management team fabricated heavily insulated, waterproofed crates and ensured the bust was given ample time to acclimate upon arrival at the British Museum.

While this collaboration may not be conventional, it has been deeply instructive. Participating in this exchange extended beyond the movement of objects to include shared processes, procedures, materials, and workflows that underpin the loan process between two museums operating in vastly different geographic and climatic contexts. Guided by the care of conservation and collection workers, both loans were successful exchanges.

Kayla Fernandez
Ethnology Collections Manager
Bishop Museum
Hawai'i, USA, ITP Fellow 2023

Wax bust of Kamehameha II (08052) packed for shipment to British Museum.

'Umeke Ki'i loaned to Bishop Museum (Oc,HAW.47). © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

My experiences of the ITP as a global network

Before applying for the International Training Programme (ITP) in 2022, I didn't have a full picture of what the programme would offer me. I knew we would share ideas, expertise, and knowledge. Little did I know that my four weeks in London, a week in Newcastle, and my ITP partner placement would change my professional and personal experiences. Days spent in the UK were filled with learning, unlearning, acquiring skills and connecting with new professional friends who changed the course of my career for good.

One of those days in London, after a session at the V&A, Nilanjana Som (India, ITP Fellow 2022) and I got into a conversation about textile conservation. She spoke about the use of herbs to preserve Indian saris, some of which are over 100 years old. She couldn't give details of how herbs are used so I became curious. Months after the annual ITP, I reached out to Priyanka Kundu (India, ITP 2022) seeking more information about the use of herbs for textile conservation. She confirmed its uses and promised to link me up with a conservator in her museum. I met the conservator from Laibhai Dalpatbhai Museum via WhatsApp. She explained the processes and entertained further questions. I was surprised when another conservator from Sri Lanka whom I met through Sanjeevani Widyaratne (Sri Lanka, ITP Fellow 2019) also affirmed herbal conservation of textile collections.

I also spent a day at the inorganic conservation laboratory at the British Museum. With tutelage of one of the conservators, Hayley Williamson, I worked on some rusty old coins. It exposed me to the conservation of bronze/metal collections without the use of ammonia solution. When I got back to Nigeria, I had to work on some bronze collections so I reached out to Hayley and she shared expertise and what I needed to do to conserve the bronze pieces. She emphasised that the use of inorganic solutions should be my last resort if every other means fails. And if I must use an inorganic chemical she recommended less hazardous chemicals than ammonia solution. I conserved the bronzes without inorganic chemicals and they came out perfectly. The use of ammonia was an old method which I have always used for removing patinas on bronzes. Through collaboration, Hayley taught me a much safer bronze conservation method.



Beatrice with ITP colleagues in Gateshead for the Museums Association Conference.



Additionally, being a fellow of the ITP has helped me develop new initiatives for my museum. I created museum trails for our audience by selecting some of our "Collections in Focus", a practice I learnt during the 2022 annual ITP programme. Children tend to get tired during gallery tours so we created children and family specific trails for some collections to increase engagement. The management of my museum loved the idea and the use of trails will kick start at the National Museum of Unity, Ibadan soon.

Attending the 2023 Gateshead MA conference in the UK was an opportunity to share, collaborate, unlearn and learn new practices to move my museum forward. The conference centred on anti-ableism – creating access and inclusion in the museum spaces. I learnt the act of physical description using speakers and shared this knowledge with my colleagues back home. My museum imbibed the act of physical description by speakers during our People with Disability (PWD) programmes at the Unity Museum. It uses description of heights, body sizes, hair types, and colour of cloths, just to mention a few. It was an act that won my heart at the Gateshead MA conference. This concept of inclusiveness gives the visually impaired a sense of belonging at our PWD programs, and we plan to continue this practice.

Through the ITP legacy project fund, I had the opportunity to attend the ICMEMOHRI 2024 conference in Kigali, Rwanda where I was able to meet a new network of professionals. The conference stressed the power of the museum. Relics of the Rwanda genocides were exhibited by museums in Rwanda as a means to reach audience and discuss National Issues to foster peace, healing, and reconciliation. This means, for a country to say "Never Again" it must walk the walk. In my opinion, the function of a museum goes beyond just exhibiting collections, it has far greater responsibilities to foster peace and inclusiveness.

The impact of the ITP on my career has been awesome. My journey as a museum professional got more interesting after I joined the ITP; it gave me a lot of opportunities for personal and professional development.

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade
Chief Conservator
Unity Museum
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2022

How the ITP shaped my international practice

When I joined the ITP in 2019, I never expected how quickly the programme would impact my career. One of the most noticeable outcomes was my involvement in international exhibitions representing Uzbekistan abroad. This included the Uzbekistan National Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, which was my first experience, and later the Uzbekistan Pavilion at the London Design Biennale, also my first time. Both projects relied on partnership, trust, and collaboration across cultures - values that the ITP instilled in me.

The London Design Biennale in 2025, where I worked as Assistant Curator, was one of the most complex and collaborative experiences of my career. Our curatorial and organisational team worked from both Tashkent and London. An award-winning studio from Almaty, Kazakhstan, developed the architectural concept for the pavilion. This made the project an important Central Asian contribution to a global platform.

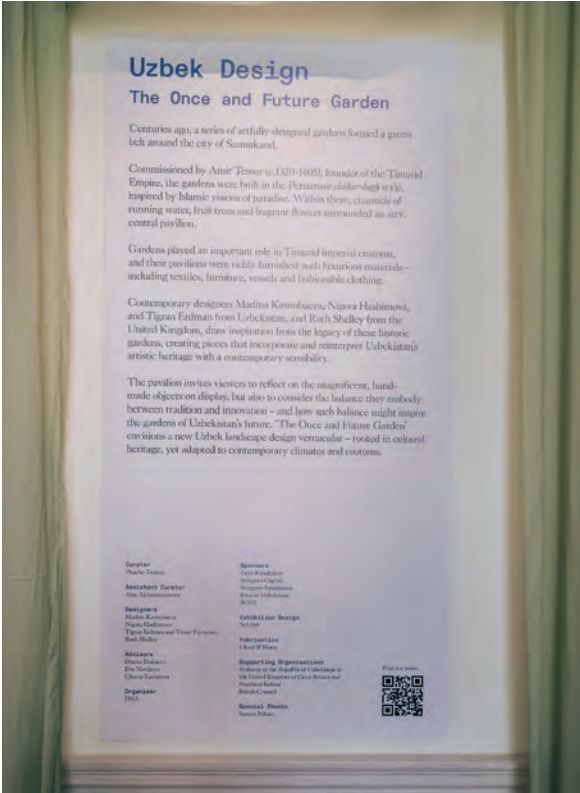
The designers featured in the pavilion each approached Uzbek heritage in their own unique way. They reinterpreted traditional textiles, materials, and visual languages through modern design practices. Instead of just recreating crafts, they engaged with the philosophy behind them, rethinking forms, symbols, and histories for today. This dialogue between the past and the present became the main narrative of the pavilion.

Coordinating these diverse perspectives—from curators and designers to architects, producers, and international partners, required the skills I developed during the ITP. These include clear communication, shared authorship, ethical representation, and sensitivity to various cultural contexts.



Throughout the project, I felt the influence of the ITP network. Discussions with fellows and colleagues from the British Museum shaped our approach to accessibility, interpretation, and the responsible presentation of cultural heritage. Working on the pavilions in Venice and London confirmed an early lesson from the ITP; collaboration is not just a method but a practice that enhances every project. Each time I work internationally, I feel the strength of this global community standing with me.

Alsu Akhmetzyanova
Independent Curator and Art Manager
Uzbekistan, ITP Fellow 2019



Alsu Akhmetzyanova
(Uzbekistan,
ITP 2019) at
the London
Design Biennale.



ITP and University of Nottingham Museum Collaborative Talk



The University of Nottingham Museum has been privileged to be part of the ITP Programme since 2015 when we joined with Lincoln Museum, already a regional ITP partner, to collaboratively welcome Fellows.

In 2022 the University Museum hosted the British Museum touring exhibition *Ancient Iraq: new discoveries*. As part of its Public Programme the Museum undertakes a well-attended public lunchtime talk called Archaeology NOW which include talks related to temporary exhibitions. The ITP has always supported the continued development of collaboration and Claire Messenger suggested reaching out to Fellows to ask if they may be interested in giving a lunchtime talk. Tamara Alateya, University Instructor, Translator and Writer (Iraq, ITP Fellow 2019) responded and along with Rashad Salim (Artist and Project Director, Safina Project) gave a live online talk titled *The Establishment of Iraq's First Maritime Heritage Museum*.

From this an International Training Programme and University of Nottingham Museum collaborative talk developed. In 2023 Heba Khairy Metwaly, Project & Exhibition Coordinator, The Grand Egyptian Museum (Egypt, ITP Fellow 2017) gave a talk titled *The Grand Egyptian Museum: A New Edifice for Egyptian Heritage*. In 2024 Roshan Mishra, Director/Curator, Taragaon

Next (Nepal, ITP Fellow 2018 and Senior Fellow 2022) discussed *Cultural Nexus: Engaging Community through Museums, Archives, Curation, and Repatriation*. Last year, in 2025, Doris Kamuye, Museum Curator, Malindi Museum, National Museums of Kenya (Kenya, ITP Fellow 2024) spoke about *Malindi; An old town with rich and diverse heritage*. All talks are projected to a live audience in the Djanogly Theatre, at Lakeside Arts. ITP Fellows and regional partners can join online or see the talk later.

These talks provide the wonderful and exciting opportunity for regional audiences and the University community to have direct access to the extraordinary work that is happening internationally. Furthermore, local community audiences can ask questions and talk directly with the speakers about their work.

I am so grateful, as I know our audiences are too, to all the Fellows who have kindly shared their incredible work and for providing this wonderful opportunity. Thank you also to the ITP for supporting this collaboration.

Clare Pickersgill
Keeper
University of Nottingham Museum

Tamara Alateya,
University
Instructor,
Translator and
Writer (Iraq, ITP
Fellow 2019).

Partnership and Collaboration: the key to a successful museum programme

Meaningful partnerships and collaborations remain the backbone of successful museum programmes. The ITP annual programme helped me a lot and shaped my professional work and career. During the ITP in 2011, I learnt the significance of partnership and collaboration in the museum sector and I'm still applying the skills and experience gained. This gave me an opportunity to develop and deliver programmes in partnership or collaboration with local and international partners.

In 2017, the NCMM in partnership with A.B U. Zaria and ICCROM organised a two-week workshop titled *Re – Org Nigeria: Saving Museum Collections*. I was invited to join the workshop while I was at the British Museum attending another important training programme, the ITP+. The day I returned to Nigeria from the UK, I travelled to the National Museum Jos, the venue of the programme. On 17 November 2025, I opened a cultural mediation programme with the theme *Culture Connect: Le. Louvre and National Museum Kaduna*. This is in partnership with French Embassy Nigeria, Alliance Francaise Kaduna, Institut Francais, National Museum Kaduna and the Louvre Museum Paris. The programme involved two hundred school children from fifteen schools. Some of the objectives of the programme are to combine the learning of French with discovering different art forms, raise awareness about the notion of heritage, and how to keep it alive today in Nigeria and France.

Also, on 2 December 2025, I opened another programme, an Art Competition and exhibition titled *Art for Healing and Unity*. This in collaboration with National Museum Kaduna and Distinguished Senator Shehu Sani. The museum invited 25 emerging artists and 25 school children from different primary and secondary schools to participate in the competition at different levels.

Moreover, on 17 December 2025, I opened another solo art exhibition titled *Memories, Vision and Perception* in partnership with Dr. Garba Nadama from the Department of Fine Art Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and is supported by Zamfara State Government, the Bespoke Corner, BlueStreak Lynx, DFA, and National Gallery of Art.

The experience gained from the ITP annual programme contributed greatly to the success of the above-mentioned partnerships and collaborations.

Dikko Idris
Deputy Director and Curator
National Museum Kaduna
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2011



Participants of the
art competition
at the National
Musuem Kaduna.

Dikko Idris
(Nigeria, ITP 2011)
delivering an
opening address
for the exhibition.



From cohort to community: my 2017 ITP fellowship and 9 years of global partnerships

When I arrived at Heathrow in July 2017, my dream of joining the ITP had finally come true after years of applying. I was there to absorb knowledge from the British Museum and my global peers. What I couldn't have foreseen was how that six-week summer programme was not an ending, but the beginning of a profound, nine-year (and counting) partnership that would redefine my professional identity.

The ITP's 20th-anniversary theme, *A Legacy of Partnership, Collaboration and Global Connections*, perfectly encapsulates my ongoing experience. For me, the legacy is not a static historical record; it is a living, breathing network of reciprocal support and shared purpose. My journey from Fellow to collaborator illustrates this dynamic.

The 2017 programme was the catalyst. The warm welcome from Claire Messenger, Rebecca Horton, and the team at Schafer House immediately framed the ITP as a "second home." Presenting my work to colleagues from cultures I'd never encountered, and learning about theirs, shattered my professional horizons. That first taste of the global network was intoxicating. It built the foundational relationships with British Museum staff and fellows worldwide that every subsequent collaboration has rested upon.

Beating Barriers Together (2018)

The true test of a network is what happens after the summer ends. In September 2018 I returned to the UK supported by the ITP. I attended the British Museum's digital memory conference, reconnecting with Claire and colleagues, effortlessly picking up threads of conversation and collaboration.

From there, I travelled to Swansea for the CIPEG conference, its theme "Beating Barriers" resonated deeply with me. Presenting my research on intangible heritage, I was no longer just an Egyptian curator but a contributor to a global Egyptological dialogue. Crucially, connections made there led to a visit from the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute to my home institution, the Grand Egyptian Museum, months later. This is the essence of the ITP's "global connections"; creating a platform where professional introductions at a UK conference translate into tangible international institutional partnerships in Egypt.

From participant to partner (2022)

The most powerful manifestation of this evolving partnership came with the Tutankhamun centenary project in 2022. Being invited back to the British Museum as a co-curator marked a significant milestone. I was now a direct partner in a BM display. This project moved beyond skill-sharing to true intellectual collaboration, exploring how modern Egyptians connect with this ancient king. The experience was transformative. It offered new skills and reflections, teaching me to create narrative links between past and present within museum displays. It underscored "the importance and effectiveness of creating a link between the past and the present to shape the future." This project demonstrated the British Museum's commitment to a partnership where an ITP alumnus contributes essential perspective and expertise to a core museum narrative.

The continuous thread: A network in motion

This trajectory of engagement has continued since then. From attending the Museums Association conference in Belfast in 2018, Tutankhamun co-curation to discuss how museums drive social change, to my ongoing role as a museum advisor and member of the IWG collaborating with the British Museum's Masterplan team. Each interaction builds on the last, creating a compound interest of shared knowledge and mutual respect. As the ITP celebrates 20 years, I see my story as one thread in its rich tapestry. The program did not just give me a training course; it embedded me into a permanent community. It transformed me from a hopeful applicant into an active node in a global network as a co-curator, advisor, and continuous collaborator.

The legacy is clear; ITP builds lifelong partnerships that transcend borders and roles. It forges collaborators who, empowered by their shared foundation, go on to "beat barriers" and shape the future of museums together. I am incredibly proud to have been part of this legacy since 2017 and look forward to many more years of partnership, collaboration, and connection.

Heba Khairy

Senior Specialist, Heritage Preservation and Management
Soudah Development, Public Investment Fund (PIF),
Saudi Arabia
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2017



Tutankhamun
Reimagined
Room 3 exhibition.

Global partnerships and collaboration at the National Museum Birnin Kudu

The Rock Art Interpretation Centre, National Museum Birnin Kudu, is an ethnographic museum established in 2011 by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Nigeria. The museum is charged with the responsibility of interpreting and preserving Nigeria's ancient rock art heritage, which speaks not only to Nigeria but to Africa and the world at large.

Rock art remains one of the most enduring records of early human creativity and settlement. Through its interpretation and conservation, the National Museum Birnin Kudu contributes significantly to the reconstruction of Nigerian history and the broader understanding of human civilization. From its inception, the museum has recognized that achieving this mission requires strong partnerships that extend beyond institutional, cultural, and geographical boundaries.

A major milestone in this collaborative journey occurred in 2019, when the museum partnered with the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and the Trust for African Rock Art (TARA). Together, we conducted an archaeological excavation at the Dutsen Murufu Rock Painting Site. This research yielded important discoveries, including stone tools of various sizes and iron implements, providing evidence of human occupation from the Early Stone Age to the Early Iron Age. These findings significantly enriched Nigeria's archaeological record and historical narrative.

International collaboration further expanded in 2022, when the museum partnered with a Colombian museum professional and researcher, Nicolas Camargo. During his visit, he carried out virtual reality documentation of selected rock painting sites and trained museum professionals in digital documentation techniques, strengthening local capacity while placing Birnin Kudu's heritage within a global digital space.

In 2024, the museum again collaborated with Ahmadu Bello University and the Jigawa State Government to conduct an archaeological reconnaissance survey across the state, aimed at identifying additional heritage sites and historical evidence.

Equally important are community-based partnerships. Working with the Birnin Kudu Museum Association and the Voice of Birnin Kudu, the museum organized a public exhibition on rock art, deepening local engagement and ownership of heritage.

These partnerships and collaborations are strongly informed by experiences gained through the International Training Programme (ITP) and other legacy projects, reinforcing the belief that museums thrive when local knowledge meets global collaboration.

Ishaq Mohammed Bello

Assistant Chief Technical Officer
National Musuem Kaduna
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2012

Community-based
partnerships in
action at the Rock
Art Interpretation
Centre.



Tatreez: Reclaiming Palestine through Embroidery

As Palestine's once vibrant culture becomes critically endangered, this ancient land's textile tradition has assumed an unrivalled importance. *Tatreez*, or Palestinian embroidery, is the pre-eminent archive of a society that has lost almost everything else. The art of embroidery on the distinctive women's *thobe* garments has become a wearable symbol of a people's resistance to a war that has yet to end.

The wealth of the embroidery's motifs and patterns, which differ from one district to another, evokes the varied landscapes and customs of the region. Generations of Palestinian women have been wearing the dress as they mark milestones in their lives: from the time-honoured traditions of weddings and childbirth to the more recent innovation of graduations. Ingrained in the life cycle, these garments are as visible and indelible a marker of Palestinian identity to their communities as they are enigmatic to outsiders. UNESCO's declaration of *tatreez* as an Intangible Heritage, in 2021, marks a momentous recognition and has lent the cause a fresh lease of life.

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) has from its beginning been committed to the preservation and propagation of Palestinian heritage. The IAMM collection keeps growing, augmented by the combination of recently commissioned works by embroiderers living in refugee camps in Lebanon as to supplement the traditional output of earlier generations. This is made possible with the assistance from Inaash, a non-profit organization who empower Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon to produce numerous handmade products using traditional *Tatreez*. Inaash not only preserve the culture but help these women to become financially independent while keeping their culture alive and sharing it with future generations.

Other than Inaash, the IAMM is also fortunate to receive the support of OmarJoseph Nasser-Khoury (Palestine, ITP 2013) who extended his exceptional expertise about Palestinian embroidery to IAMM. Participation of OmarJoseph in this collaboration has opened a huge opportunity for IAMM staff to learn directly from an expert who has vast knowledge about the subject. <https://www.bmitpglobalnetwork.org/itp-legacy-projects/knowledge-exchange-fellowship/>



Caftan silk dress
Callilee.

Caftan silk
wedding dress

Caftan silk dress
Iod & Ramla.

Interest and advocacy among Palestinians at home and abroad have grown beyond 1948 and well into the digital era. Interest has also grown within the international community. Palestinian traditional attire has since risen to the occasion to embody the memory of a lost landscape. The exhibition will be held in June 2026 in both temporary galleries of the museum. The themes of the first gallery go beyond the beauty of the thobes, into the wider world of social practices and material culture, featuring accessories and artefacts that embody Palestinian identity. The second gallery highlights the revival of *tatreez* by a series of collections of thobes and shawls made by these Palestinian artisans living in refugee camps in Lebanon, commissioned by IAMM through Inaash. The exhibits showcase the continuity of an aesthetic expression that deserves the widest appreciation.

With the publication that accompanies the exhibition, the intention is for Malaysia to provide a platform to celebrate the enduring spirit of a culture that comes ever closer to the abyss.

Rashidah Salim

Senior Manager, Collection's Office
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia
Malaysia, ITP Fellow 2016



Caftan silk dress
Ramallah.

My ITP reflections



It seems like yesterday that I was selected to be part of the British Museum's International Training Programme. This invitation carried a deep sense of accomplishment and it left me profoundly fulfilled. That feeling grew stronger as I stepped off the plane and saw the taxi driver waiting with a bold sign bearing my name. I am a proud ITP-er and museum professional who has been fortunate to participate in several well-curated and highly organised museum-themed events since being selected for the International Training Programme in 2010. Through this opportunity, I met fellow museum professionals from different countries and we were all eager to connect, build friendships, exchange ideas, and learn from one another.

I also attended the ICOM EXPO in Shanghai in June of 2010, where myself and colleagues performed traditional marriage rites in Nigeria's three major indigenous languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba). This performance became another defining highlight of my journey, inspired by our cultural differences yet underscored by the many similarities that unite us. Through this presentation, we sought to introduce the Chinese audience to the richness and diversity of Nigeria's cultural heritage. Through research and observation, I discovered cultural parallels in everyday practices. For instance, the use of a traditional broom similar to that used by the Igbo people for sweeping their compounds. These experiences reinforced my desire to showcase elements of our culture while exploring their equivalents in Chinese society and I was deeply moved to discover that such connections exist.

The International Training Programme has influenced my professional journey in countless ways. I attended my first programme knowing that I would return to Nigeria with more knowledge, more confidence, and be better equipped as a museum professional. As a curator, that experience transformed my understanding of museum practice entirely. It was during that first trip that I truly grasped the essence of my profession. I came to understand that museum work is a calling rooted in service: giving back to society, fostering unity, building meaningful connections across borders, promoting love and mutual respect, and educating communities.

Back in Nigeria, I continued to contribute actively to the growth and visibility of my museum, participating in the opening of several exhibitions, recognising exhibitions as a powerful medium for showcasing a country's rich cultural heritage. Museums, as repositories of our collective culture and history, fulfil this responsibility through thoughtfully curated exhibitions that pass down authentic and valuable narratives about our people and traditions to present and future generations.

The Training Programme experience inspired me to pursue a Masters degree in Curating at the University of Essex, a decision that marked a significant milestone in my professional development. Since beginning my master's programme, I have been consistently invited by the ITP to attend its summer events for new cohorts of fellows, reinforcing my continued connection to the programme and its community.

Most recently, I had the privilege of attending the MA Conference in November 2023, an experience that further enriched my academic and professional journey and reaffirmed my commitment to advancing museum practice, strengthening global cultural partnerships, and preserving heritage for generations to come.

Presently, I am volunteering with the Surrey Heath Museum, where I support the documentation of their collections. This role allows me to continue applying my curatorial training in a practical setting, contributing to improved collections management while further strengthening my professional skills and commitment to best practices in museum documentation.

None of these milestones would have been possible without attending my first ITP. Through the ITP, I have built lasting friendships across the world. We continue to engage through ongoing virtual trainings and collaborative online sessions, where we exchange knowledge, brainstorm ideas, and learn from one another in our shared mission to promote and preserve our collective culture and heritage. I must not forget the invaluable impact of the team, their efforts and sacrifices remain the building blocks that has held the ITP Project together. My profound gratitude to all of you. We are where we are today because you dare to believe!

As the British Museum International Training Programme marks 20 years, I stand as one of its many living testimonies. The ITP has shaped my professional identity, expanded my worldview, and empowered me to contribute meaningfully to museums, communities, and cultural institutions across borders. Its legacy is not only measured in years, but in lives transformed, bridges built, and cultures united and I am proud to be part of that enduring impact.

Cynthia Iruobe

Chief Curator

National Commission of Museums and Monuments
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2010



Cynthia Iruobe,
ITP Fellow 2010,
at the Museums
Association
Conference
in Gateshead.

Bridging Antiquity and Modernity: Mentorship with Ian Jenkins

Meeting Ian Jenkins in Zagreb in September 2015 was a moment that reshaped the course of my professional life. I had first encountered his work a few months earlier, in June 2015, at the British Museum in London, where I was captivated by his exhibition *Defining Beauty*. The way he presented sculpture, giving classical antiquity a vibrancy and immediacy that spoke to contemporary audiences, was revelatory. "Time may change me, but I can't trace time," as David Bowie once wrote. In the years that followed, I came to understand how formative that moment had been, and how enduring his influence remains.

When I met him in Zagreb, I had the privilege of guiding him through the retrospective of Auguste Rodin at the Art Pavilion, which I had co-curated, and through Atelier Meštrović, the museum where I work as Chief Curator. At the time, I was completing my doctoral research, *From Antique Models to Neoclassicism: A Classical Component in the Work of Ivan Meštrović*, and our shared fascination with the dialogue between ancient and modern sculpture created an immediate connection. I could hardly believe I was conversing with a colleague whose exhibition had moved me so profoundly.

Shortly after our meeting, Ian encouraged me to apply for the International Training Programme. The following summer, I spent six weeks in London and Manchester, an experience that profoundly shaped my curatorial and scholarly perspective. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him and his colleague Celeste Farge, whose insight and generosity made every discussion inspiring.



Barbara and Ian
presenting their
project in the
British Museum
lecture theatre.

Rodin British
Museum opening
in April 2018.

Barbara Vujanovic
and Ian Jenkins.



One of the most unforgettable moments came during Ian's 2018 exhibition *Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece* at the British Museum, when I had the privilege of delivering a lecture on Rodin's *Thinker*. Standing in the galleries that had inspired me years before, sharing my own reflections, was both surreal and transformative.

To coincide with his exhibition, I worked on *Rodin: Rethinking the Fragment*, which toured Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal, Holburne Museum in Bath and The New Art Gallery in Walsall, from summer 2018 to 2019. Experiencing Ian's method firsthand, and collaborating closely with him and Celeste, reinforced my admiration for his approach, his meticulous care, and his ability to animate classical forms for modern audiences. Ian, with his background as a stonemason, saw every surface, every form, every fracture in sculpture in a way that was entirely unique – teaching me to notice the subtle details that bring stone to life. Our shared love of David Bowie often lightened long days of curatorial work, reminding me that passion and playfulness can coexist with rigor and precision.

Working with Ian Jenkins taught me that museum work is not merely about preserving the past but about creating conversations across time. His mentorship, generosity, and insight continue to guide my research and professional choices. Every conversation in Zagreb, Split, and London, every lecture, and every exhibition remains etched in my memory – a reminder that some encounters do more than inspire; they change the trajectory of a life.

Barbara Vujanović

Chief Curator

Meštrović Atelier (The Ivan Meštrović Museums)
Croatia, ITP Fellow 2016

Golu: a festive display of dolls

Earlier this year, the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum marked an important milestone with the exhibition of a collection generously shared by one of its visitors. It was a joy for me to curate this exhibition with the assistance of my colleagues Saloni Singhi and Gul Paharaj.

Golu, a Tamil word meaning 'Divine Presence', refers to a tradition of displaying dolls in some parts of South India. A collection of vibrant dolls, in various sizes are arranged on stepped platforms. This tradition is known by several names, such as Bommala Kolu in Telugu (Court of Toys), Gombe Habba in Kannada (Doll Festival), and Bommai Golu in Tamil (Doll Decoration), and it's associated with the festival of Navaratri, particularly in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana. In some parts of Andhra Pradesh, these dolls are also displayed during the celebration of Makar Sankranti and known as Sankranti Bommala Kolu in Telugu. The exhibition at the L D Museum (located in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Western India) reflects this living heritage.

The key attraction of this tradition is the diverse range of themes portrayed by the dolls, which includes not only the scenes of epics and mythology but also cultural, social, and contemporary themes. Local artisans create these dolls by using a variety of materials, including clay, wood, terracotta, cloth, and papier mache. These simple and sometimes intricately detailed handmade dolls have strong cultural roots and contribute to children's wellbeing, while serving as an effective educational tool. The dolls are passed down from one generation to the next, and the collection continues to grow as more dolls are added over time. During this festive display, homes transform into a space for community gathering, as doors are opened for guests, stories are shared, along with songs, and local delicacies. It is a tradition with a beautiful amalgamation of storytelling, vibrant artistry, and rituals.



These dolls were on display at the museum for more than a month as Rajeswari and Pankaj Gorana's Collection. Rajeswari is an environmental educator, while Pankaj is a graphic designer. They celebrate this tradition annually in their home during Navaratri. Rajeswari, originally from South India, fondly recalls her childhood memories of witnessing this tradition in her neighbourhood. She currently lives in Ahmedabad, away from her native land. To relive her memories, and also to acquaint her daughter, Gauri, with this tradition, she began collecting Golu dolls. The richness of their collection enabled the museum to showcase an important segment of the traditional toy heritage of India.

The curation line has adapted the protocol of a museum exhibition while adhering to the traditional doll display. For us, it was a scope of research on a collection beyond the museum and present artefacts besides the collection that the L D Museum is renowned for. We were amazed upon discovering how the exhibition welcomed new audiences of all ages and transformed the gallery into a forum for sharing memories.

There were two prominent audience groups – one who were familiar with the Golu doll tradition but visited the exhibition to see the tradition being showcased in a museum. The other group consisted of those experiencing this for the first time. During the display, the museum education department devised age-specific tours, interactive storytelling sessions, and games to make the exhibition meaningful to the visitors. Additionally, Golu doll merchandise was created for the museum shop. I will remember this as an opportunity that inspired me to imagine the possibilities of collaboration between museums and the public.

Priyanka Kundu
Museum Keeper, in-charge of Museum Education and Outreach
Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum
India, ITP Fellow 2022



Golu Dolls and a young visitor looking at the Golu Dolls. Images courtesy of Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum.

Can belonging be curated?

Protecting intangible cultural heritage is often linked to large museums, big budgets, and formal institutions. However, living heritage does not always need big spaces or complex systems. In many cases, it is kept alive through people, daily practices, shared memories, and a strong sense of belonging. Small local museums can therefore play a powerful role in keeping intangible heritage alive. The Tas and Kapal Museum is located in Dezak village, Saravan city, in south-east Iran. This small museum offers a different way of thinking about heritage protection. It was created by a local enthusiast passionate about preserving his community's heritage, who gradually turned his home into a space for sharing the Baluch community's culture and traditions.

Although the museum includes many ethnographic objects, its main value is not the objects themselves. What makes the museum special is the experience around it. Visitors are welcomed into a home as guests, not as anonymous museum visitors. Through conversation, storytelling, and traditional hospitality, each object is connected to lived experience and personal memory. Heritage here is not something to look at from a distance; it is something to listen to, feel, and understand.

The museum's name is also meaningful. "Tas and Kapal" comes from a traditional and endangered local system of water distribution in Baluchestan. Choosing this name is a very thoughtful and intelligent decision, as it draws attention to local knowledge that is slowly disappearing and gives it new visibility through the museum.

Belonging may not be something that can be curated in the usual museum sense, but it can be encouraged. Sometimes, a passionate individual can do what an institution cannot. All it takes is a home, a story, and the willingness to share both.

Safoura Kalantari
Cultural Heritage Expert
Ministry in Sistan and Baluchestan Province,
Southeast Regional Museum of Iran
Iran, ITP Fellow 2025



Photos of the Tas and Kapal Museum.

Digital approaches to heritage preservation through the Ubutabire programme

In November 2024, the Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy collaborated with Milele Museum, dedicated to preserving and reimagining African cultural heritage through innovative technologies and community engagement. Through the Ubutabire programme, a word rooted in the Rwandan value of caring for heritage, the partnership aimed to strengthen museum practice while exploring digital approaches to heritage presentation. It created a shared platform for museum professionals and local communities to exchange knowledge, skills, and perspectives. By integrating local narratives, oral histories, and community knowledge into both physical and digital exhibition formats, the collaboration encouraged inclusive storytelling, presenting collections as living carriers of memory, identity, and lived experience, and making them accessible to diverse audiences beyond the museum's walls.

The result of this partnership was a temporary exhibition and I would like to present an installation that was gifted to the museum.

Title: Nyirarumaga w'Ibinyeeto
Artist: Mackson Maximilien (Rwanda)
in collaboration with Milele Museum

Year: 2024
Medium: Installation / Kinetic sculpture
Dimensions: 1.5 meters
Collection: Ethnographic Museum of Huye
Credit Line: Gift from Milele Museum

Description:
Nyirarumaga w'Ibinyeeto honours Nyirarumaga, Queen Mother of King Ruganzu II Ndoli, a key figure in Rwanda's 16th-century cultural history. She transformed royal praise poetry by introducing Ibisigo Nyabami, a form that celebrated multiple kings, expanding a tradition previously limited to praising a single ruler (Ibinyeeto). The sculpture's title reflects this paradox, naming the old form while celebrating the woman who redefined it. Inspired by the Nkunda Amahoro ("loving peace") school notebook cover, the work connects heritage, education, and everyday life. Made from recycled metals and computer parts, it highlights sustainability and the importance of integrating pre-colonial history, oral traditions, and decolonial perspectives into education. Interactive sound and visual elements invite playful engagement, linking past and present through participation.

Chantal Umuhoza
Curator
Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy
Rwanda, ITP Fellow 2018 & Senior Fellow 2025



Nyirarumaga w'Ibinyeeto sculpture by Mackson Maximilien.

Impact after returning home: from training to real change

In 2024, I had the honour of participating in the British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP). Although only two years have passed since my participation, the experience has profoundly impacted both my personal and professional life. The training reshaped my perspective on the role of museums—not merely as places to display artifacts, but as centres for education, community engagement, and innovation. Since returning home, I have committed to transforming the skills and knowledge gained from ITP into tangible projects that impact the Iraq Museum and its surrounding community.

Upon my return, I assumed the position of Database Manager at the museum. By introducing new and innovative ideas, I was later selected as a member of the committee of experts responsible for setting a forward-looking vision for the development of the Iraq Museum. This professional advancement reflects the direct impact of the programme on my career, enabling me to apply modern insights and leverage global expertise to enhance institutional work.

One of the most influential areas has been professional initiatives within the museum. Inspired by the ITP's focus on modern museum practices, I began implementing projects that blend tradition with technology. For instance, I launched a project to visually revive and interpret Assyrian sculptures in the Assyrian Hall using projection mapping technology. Additionally, we began developing



Assyrian relief before and after projection mapping.

Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji presenting.

an audio guide that allows visitors to experience the collection with broader context and information. Another project involved using artificial intelligence and modern technology to digitally reconstruct lost or fragmented artifacts, helping visitors and researchers better understand Iraq's cultural heritage. These initiatives not only enhance the museum experience but also demonstrate how global knowledge can be adapted to meet local needs.

Beyond the museum walls, I focused on community and field projects. I collaborated with a team of volunteers to organise archaeological site clean-ups, awareness campaigns, and programs promoting cultural heritage. These activities highlight the importance of public engagement and strengthen the local community's sense of responsibility toward their heritage. By integrating volunteer work with educational programs, we expanded the museum's impact beyond its building, making history and heritage preservation a part of people's everyday lives.

The network of colleagues I built through the 2024 ITP and previous and subsequent cohorts has been a pivotal factor in advancing my work and projects. Continuous communication, idea exchange, and consultations enabled us to develop new strategies, adopt innovative solutions, and foster an international spirit of collaboration, enriching both professional and museum work.

Teamwork and collaborative spirit have been central to these efforts. Leveraging ITP's emphasis on networking and partnerships, I coordinated with colleagues, volunteers, and local institutions to implement practical and sustainable projects. These experiences strengthened my understanding of the importance of collective work and knowledge sharing, in line with the program's mission to foster global connections.

On a personal level, the ITP experience transformed my approach to problem-solving and project management. I became more confident in proposing new ideas, more strategic in planning initiatives, and more aware of the potential to achieve innovation even with limited resources. The experience also provided me with a deeper understanding that continuous change requires a clear vision and effective collaboration, and that well-planned small projects can create tangible, visible impact.

In short, my participation in the ITP has been a catalyst for work, innovation, and community engagement. From in-museum initiatives like the audio guide and AI-enhanced artifact revitalization to volunteer campaigns and community projects, the impact of the training is evident in every aspect of my work. The program equipped me with the tools and confidence to improve institutional practices, engage the community, inspire colleagues, and create an effect that extends far beyond my immediate work environment. ITP has shown me that returning home is not the end of the journey but the beginning of transforming knowledge into real and meaningful action, and developing a future vision for the Iraq Museum that serves both heritage and society.

Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji
Head of Database Division, Coordinator and Focal Point
Iraq Museum
Iraq, ITP Fellow 2024



What Makes China

The Palace Museum, transformed from the Forbidden City in 1925, stands as one of China's most important cultural institutions. Its extensive collection and architectural grandeur reflect the depth of Chinese civilization. The museum frequently collaborates with domestic and international partners, particularly in organising exhibitions that enrich public access to cultural treasures.

A prime example of such collaboration is the 2022 exhibition *What Makes China*, where I served as a curator. This exhibition was remarkable for its grand narrative and meticulous design. It employed the powerful metaphor of a river—with its source, flow, and convergence—to structure the story of Chinese civilization. This framework elegantly connected over 130 precious artifacts from 30 institutions across the country, transforming individual objects into a coherent and epic historical journey.

The success of this exhibition hinged fundamentally on multi-party collaboration. It was planned by the National Cultural Heritage Administration, hosted jointly by the Palace Museum and China Media Group, and supported by numerous museums. This partnership operated on multiple levels; academically, as scholars from different institutions co-created the interpretive framework; logistically, through the unprecedented sharing of national treasures; and in terms of outreach, through an integrated media campaign that amplified its impact nationwide.

Ultimately, *What Makes China* demonstrated that the most compelling museum projects arise from synergy. By combining resources, expertise, and channels, the partners created not just an exhibition, but a significant cultural event that successfully engaged the public with a foundational question about Chinese civilization.

Haikun Bo
Curator
The Palace Museum
China, ITP Fellow 2008



What Makes China at the Palace Museum.

Isa Opo (The Widow's Pot)

Isa Opo (Widow's Pot) is a clay pot displayed in the pottery gallery of the National Museum of Unity, Ibadan, Nigeria. Its provenance is from the southwestern part of Nigeria. Pottery is an ancient craft of earthenware's that is still relevant in the 21st century in Nigeria. This craft gave the renowned Nigerian coil potter, Ladi Kwali international recognition. In recent times, contemporary artists who make pottery utensils have had lot of patronage in Nigeria, due to its health benefits.

Isa Opo (Widow's Pot) is a clay pot bequeathed to a widow after the passing of her husband. This pot symbolizes the unexpected transition of a wife to widowhood. No woman prays to lose her husband whom she has lived with all her life, but when the unexpected happens, at the passing of her husband, her husband's family buys "Isa Opo". This pot passes lots of information to the widow. It is a sign that she has the backing of her in-laws despite her husband's death and it promises the woman support and solidarity. It also speaks to the fact that she has been a good and adorable wife to her husband's relatives while he was alive and the in-laws seize the opportunity to appreciate her. Promising her their loyalty and support after her husband's demise.

Hence, the family takes up the responsibilities of their late brother, son, or uncle by taking care of his widow and children. But there is a caveat, if she chooses to remarry, she won't be denied that right, but they will make her realise they prefer to have her as a member of their family rather than remarrying. Isa Opo is used by the widow to store water or valuables. This pot is therapeutic, each time the woman sees the pot it reminds her of the support and love from her in-laws. If the widow in question hasn't been cordial with her in-laws, she wouldn't be given "Isa Opo" nor enjoy the privileges that come with it.

Nigeria is a country of about 250 ethnic groups and are a communal people. The past practice of "Isa Opo" in the southwestern Nigeria buttresses this fact. In Yoruba culture, a widow is not only seen as a woman who has lost her husband, but also a custodian of her late husband's legacy, especially through their children. Just as a pot stores and preserves, the widow stores and preserves the family's lineage, memory, and moral values for the next generation. This practice has evolved over time and "Isa Opo" is no longer bequeathed to widows, but its moral values of taking care of wives that have cordial relationships with their in-laws still remains.

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade
Chief Conservator
Unity Museum
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2022



Isa Opo (Widow's Pot).

Radha's Ordeal (Kalanka Bhanjan)

Radha's Ordeal/Kalanka Bhanjan is a powerful episode from Vaishnava devotional literature of India that dramatizes the tension between divine love and social morality. The term Kalanka Bhanjan literally means 'the removal of stigma', and the narrative centres on Radha's public trial to prove the purity of her love for Krishna.

In the story, Radha is accused by society of moral transgression because of her intense, secret love for Krishna—a love that transcends worldly norms. To silence the accusations and restore her honour, Radha is subjected to an ordeal. The ordeal illustrates her absolute surrender, often accompanied by the realization that her existence is purely for Krishna, as seen in the Bhagavata Purana. In many literary and visual versions, she is asked to perform an act that only someone of absolute purity could accomplish, such as carrying water in a perforated pot. Through divine intervention, Radha succeeds, and the false stigma attached to her is destroyed.

Symbolically, Kalanka Bhanjan elevates Radha as the embodiment of Bhakti; pure, selfless devotion. The episode challenges rigid social judgments and asserts that divine love cannot be measured by conventional moral codes. In visual art, especially in late medieval and early colonial Indian painting traditions, the scene is rendered with emotional intensity: Radha appears dignified yet vulnerable, surrounded by onlookers, while Krishna's divine presence subtly affirms her innocence.

Thus, Radha's Ordeal is not merely a tale of accusation and vindication, but a profound theological statement on love, faith, and spiritual truth triumphing over societal prejudice.

The artist, Bama Pada Banerjee (1851–1932) was a pioneering Indian artist associated with the Bengal School of Art, a movement that sought to revive indigenous aesthetic traditions in response to academic European realism. Trained at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, Banerjee developed a distinctive style that blended lyrical line, subdued colour, and spiritual subject matter.

He is best known for his evocative paintings based on Vaishnava themes, particularly episodes from the lives of Radha and Krishna. Works such as Kalanka Bhanjan reveal his sensitivity to emotion and symbolism, portraying devotional narratives with restraint rather than dramatic excess. Banerjee's figures are often elongated and graceful, set against simplified backgrounds that enhance the contemplative mood.

Influenced by Abanindranath Tagore and the ideals of Swadeshi aesthetics, Bama Pada Banerjee contributed to shaping a modern Indian visual language rooted in myth, poetry, and spirituality. His works are today valued for their quiet intensity and devotional depth.

This oil painting (R5157, 37x45 cm.) from the collection of Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, India depicts Radha at the river, a scene commonly associated with the theme of Kalanka Bhanjan, or the endurance and dissolution of slander. Radha stands knee-deep in flowing water, her body gently inclined forward, her hands lowered in a gesture that suggests ritual, surrender, or silent reflection.

Though adorned with ornaments and a richly draped sari, her expression is subdued, conveying inner sorrow rather than external beauty. Her lowered eyes and calm posture reflect quiet strength and moral resolve.

Behind her stand two female figures, possibly companions or villagers, whose presence evokes the weight of social observation. They act as silent witnesses, reinforcing Radha's isolation and the pressure of communal judgment. The river becomes a powerful symbol of purification and truth, suggesting that Radha's virtue does not need verbal defence—her purity will emerge through endurance.

The subdued palette of earthy greens, browns, and ochres creates a melancholic, introspective atmosphere. The soft handling of forms and blurred edges lend the scene a timeless, almost dreamlike quality. Rather than depicting divine intervention, the painting focuses on Radha's inner resilience. Through this restrained visual language, the artist presents Radha not only as a devotional figure but also as a symbol of feminine dignity, patience, and spiritual strength in the face of injustice.

Krishna appears through the water as a silent, divine presence, suggesting that the river itself becomes a medium of his compassion and protection. His emergence in water signifies the unseen assurance that Radha's suffering is witnessed and sanctified by the divine.

This painting was included along with another 49 paintings in my curated exhibition '*Krishna: An Iconographic Representation*' held at Victoria Memorial Hall from 2015 to 2019.

Joyee Roy

Head, Documentation and Curation
Victoria Memorial Hall
India, ITP Fellow 2011



Radha's Ordeal, or, Kalanka Bhanjan by Bama Pada Banerjee



Finding Zóbel Prints

The exhibition *Finding Zóbel Prints* is the culmination of years of research into the printmaking practice of Filipino-Spanish abstract artist Fernando Zóbel (1924–1984). From 2020 to 2024, this research took me to Madrid and Cuenca in Spain; London and Salisbury in the United Kingdom; and to various public and private collections in the Philippines.

This remarkable find was set in motion by the gift of a book—*Zóbel. Contrapuntos*—which I presented to Frances Carey, Chairman of the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust. It was she who introduced me to Zóbel's donation to the British Museum during my participation in the 2019 ITP. The first phase of the research involved my return to the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings in 2020, supported by the British Council's *Connections Through Culture* programme. It was there that I uncovered a previously undocumented donation by Zóbel, made between 1972 and 1974, consisting of 106 prints and drawings. This discovery evolved into a passion project structured around three geographical phases: (1) London, (2) Spain, and (3) the United States. The ITP Research Grant provided crucial support for the continuation of this project in 2021 and 2024, enabling further research at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, the custodian of Zóbel's legacy and archives in Spain, and at the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca.

In addition, these research journeys and discoveries were documented and shared through the following blog articles published on the BM ITP online channels. The peer-reviewed journal *Perspectives in Arts and Humanities Asia*, published by the Ateneo de Manila University-School of Humanities, likewise featured my article titled *Finding Zóbel Prints* in Volume 15, No. 1 (2025).

The primary aim of my research was to locate and catalogue Zóbel's prints. The resulting exhibition at Ayala Museum presented a chronological survey of his prints held in Philippine collections, complemented by reproductions from overseas institutions. This visual narrative traced his printmaking journey from the 1950s through the 1980s, highlighting his multifaceted roles as printmaker, educator, and art patron.

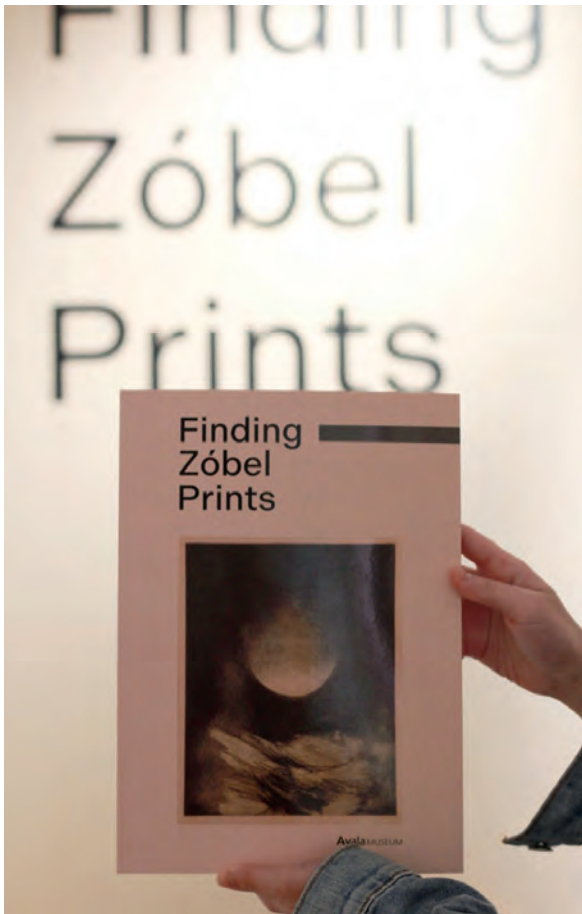
Aprille Tijam

Associate Director and
Head of Exhibitions and Collections
Ayala Museum
Philippines, ITP Fellow 2019

Aprille Tijam conducted a curator's tour of the exhibition during the "print demo day" educational program at Ayala Museum. Photograph by Cedrick John Andres.

An exhibition catalogue, authored by Aprille, was published by Ayala Foundation, in conjunction with the exhibition presented at Ayala Museum in 2025. Photo copyright owned by Ayala Foundation, inc. Photograph by Paige Espiritu. Published with permission from heirs of Fernando Zóbel.

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Furniture traditions of Sri Lanka: A Study of the Colombo National Museum Collection, a journey through craftsmanship, heritage, and living history

The Colombo National Museum preserves an exceptional collection of high-value furniture representing the periods of Portuguese, Dutch, and British rule in Sri Lanka, alongside examples from the Kandyan Kingdom. Collectively, these objects offer valuable insight into the evolution of both local and colonial material culture, reflecting the aesthetic sensibilities, artisanal traditions, and technological practices of their respective eras. The furniture displays a high level of craftsmanship and artistic refinement, revealing how makers integrated functional design with intricate decorative techniques. As such, the collection holds significant cultural, historical, and artistic value, serving as a rich resource for the study of Sri Lanka's heritage and its long history of cross-cultural exchange.

Furniture Usage in Sri Lanka: A Historical Overview

Historical records show the types of furniture used in temples, mansions, and aristocratic households in Sri Lanka since the beginning of the Christian era. However, due to the perishable nature of wood, none of these early examples have survived.

From about the 14th century onward, furniture such as chairs, couches, tables, chests, and beds became increasingly common in royal palaces and aristocratic households. The only other groups permitted to use high-quality furniture were Buddhist monks residing in temples. Ordinary people were generally not allowed access to such items. Paintings provide evidence of ancient Sri Lankan furniture traditions, particularly artworks from the Kandyan and post-Kandyan periods.



Sanjeewani Furniture.

Ancient Furniture of Sri Lanka: Types and Uses

Many of the furniture items displayed in this gallery were introduced to Sri Lanka by the Portuguese following their arrival in the sixteenth century. The Sinhala word putuwa, meaning chair, is derived from Portuguese. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, furniture such as chairs, tables, and couches were produced in Ceylon, in European colonial styles.

With the arrival of the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the use of furniture became more widespread. Indigenous furniture began to emulate the simple and utilitarian forms introduced by the Dutch, while simultaneously evolving into a refined art form. Of the Dutch-period furniture that survives in Sri Lanka today, chairs are the most common. Designed in the popular Indo-Portuguese style, these chairs can be grouped into two main types. One featuring bold and prominent carvings and the other distinguished by more elaborate and intricate detailing.

During the British period, Europeans introduced redesigned furniture to Sri Lanka but due to the tropical climate, local timber was often unsuitable for replicating wood veneers, limiting the durability and performance of these pieces.

The Timbers behind the Craft: Types of Wood Used

This wooden furniture played a significant role in shaping the simple, traditional furniture art of Sri Lanka. The most used timbers included Nāḍun, Stainwood, Calamander, Ebony, Teak, Tamarind, Kumbuk, Na, Suriyamara, Palu, and Jack. While later furniture used interlocking wood panels due to the scarcity of large timber. The earliest pieces were crafted from single wooden boards, particularly tables, cupboards, and chests, reflecting the availability of giant trees at the time. The bright and distinctive wood panels on these surfaces not only enhance the artistic appeal of the furniture but also provide valuable chronological evidence of the periods in which they were made.

The Colombo National Museum's new Furniture Gallery, showcasing an exquisite collection from the Kandyan Kingdom and the colonial periods, is soon to be opened to the public.

Furniture can reflect a society's cultural, social, and artistic values. In Sri Lanka, furniture traditions evolved over centuries, influenced by indigenous practices and European colonial styles. The Colombo National Museum's Furniture Gallery showcases this evolution, highlighting local craftsmanship and the adaptation of foreign designs to Sri Lankan materials and aesthetics. The Colombo National Museum's Furniture Gallery offers an overview of Sri Lanka's furniture heritage from the Kandyan era to the colonial period. The collection highlights how local artisans skilfully adapted foreign designs to native materials and cultural contexts. Furniture in Sri Lanka served as a marker of social status as well as being functional, reflecting artistry, technical skill, and cultural exchange.

Sanjeewani Widiyarthne
Museum Keeper
National Museum Colombo
Sri Lanka, ITP Fellow 2019



Museikon and its new UNESCO World Heritage horizon

Romania first applied for UNESCO membership more than 70 years ago. It joined in 1954 and later became a member state in 1956. In 1991, soon after the fall of communism, Romania added the first site on the list and the number of sites has since expanded, with 11 invaluable heritage landmarks. Other sites await recognition and our museum's team are continuously striving to preserve this type of heritage and make it known worldwide.

We are happy to announce that since 2024, Museikon has been part of the world's most prestigious heritage list. We often say that Museikon is a museum inside a museum, due to the building's rich and complex history and this recent listing in UNESCO confirms that.

The ruins we preserved in the museum's basement and at the ground floor have been here for more than 19 centuries, almost two millennia. The Roman structures have survived and served as a base for nearly 2000 years of history in Alba Iulia. In 2014-2015 when the Museikon project started, large parts of the Roman castrum was presumed lost, especially the later constructions from the 4th century. But the Roman legacy survived beneath centuries of plaster and thanks to national and international efforts to include the 2nd century AD Roman frontier in UNESCO's list, Museikon and other Roman military structures from Alba Iulia were listed in 2024 as part of the transnational UNESCO project Frontier of The Roman Empire – Dacia.

The new status provides a framework for the preservation of our local heritage and a visible global recognition of its value. The special type of heritage that Museikon is

safeguarding, as well as the building itself, comprise a significant episode of Romanian cultural identity and also a unique contribution to the world's history.

From the conservator's point of view, Museikon and the Roman site from Alba Iulia is now under international legal protection. That means we benefit from emergency assistance, technical assistance, professional training, and international monitoring. These benefits will help the local community to expand its tourism sector and encourage various local people to create small-scale creative industries.

We hope this opportunity will promote us and help to sustain an international cultural dialogue. We are excited to announce that these efforts are already proving fruitful. I was recently awarded the Tyler Visiting Fellowship by the University of Tasmania in Hobart, Australia. This will be another step forward for our museum and a very important cultural bridge, uniting two institutions and two collections located over 16000km apart.

As part of an ongoing emergency preventive conservation project to safeguard the ecclesiastical heritage of Transylvania, a late XVIII century iconostasis from the Apuseni Mountains was dismantled and transported to Museikon for further conservation and restoration work. The entire project will be presented in our international cultural dialogue with the University of Tasmania and after it's full restoration it will be displayed in our museum, enriching the offer we have as a UNESCO site.

Ioan Oprea
Conservator
National Museum of the Union Alba Iulia
Romania, ITP Fellow 2019



Safeguarding the ecclesiastic heritage of Transylvania.



Ayala Museum and Louvre Abu Dhabi: A cultural collaboration

Two pre-colonial gold objects (ca. 10th-13th century) from the Ayala Museum collection have been on loan to the Louvre Abu Dhabi (LAD) since 2022. These are exhibited at LAD's Permanent Galleries, with the aim of presenting the diversity of cultures and to highlight the importance of cultural materials in Asia. The funerary mask from Butuan, Agusan del Norte was selected to show the similarities of traditions with other masks made of gold from Peru (from the Musee du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac collection) and Lebanon or Syria (from Louvre Paris collection). This was to illustrate the "conquering of death and perpetuation of eternal existence in the afterlife", as stated on the caption of these three funerary masks. And why gold? The malleability of the material allowed for the immediate crafting of likeness during the person's life and symbolizes the status of the deceased person. The gold cup from Nabua, Camarines Sur, on the other hand, shares the display with other bowls from China and Korea to demonstrate the shared functionality while showcasing the inspirations for the designs of these objects.

By sharing these objects through international exhibitions and loans, this recognizes that Filipino artistry is deeply rooted in traditions and that these objects bear witness to early interactions with diverse cultures as early as the 9th century, as well as active participation in global networks such as the Manila Galleon trade. Together, these objects connect our countries and institutions through cultural diplomacy.

After its first year on loan, a significant increase in Filipino visitors was reported by LAD. By 2023, 9.4% of visitors to the Louvre Abu Dhabi were of Filipino nationality. Even more impressive is the fact that 25% of the visitors who are residents of the

Aprille P. Tijam with Manuel Rabaté, Louvre Abu Dhabi Director, in front of the funerary mask made of pre-colonial gold loaned by Louvre Abu Dhabi from the Ayala Museum.

Gold cup (ca. 10th-13th century) from Nabua, Camarines Sur. Ayala Museum collection.



United Arab Emirates were Filipino. In 2024, Filipino visitors represented 4.8% of the overall audience, accounting for 19.9% of UAE-resident visitors, while in 2025, this increased to 5.4% of total visitors, representing 25.2% of UAE-resident visitors. Manuel Rabaté, LAD Director, notes that "At Louvre Abu Dhabi, we always wanted to send a strong signal of belonging to Filipino communities, as well as to Filipinos visiting the country. This is why this ambitious programme was established first with the Ayala Museum, and later also with the National Museum of Manila. This vision has guided our approach, and we hope it will continue in the years to come". It is hoped that this collaboration will continue to engage Filipino communities, share our cherished traditions through the collection to an international audience, and foster a sense of pride in our ancestry and cultural heritage—particularly among the Filipino diaspora worldwide.

Aprille Tijam
Associate Director and Head of Exhibitions and Collections
Ayala Museum
Philippines, ITP Fellow 2019



A new chapter in my archaeological journey

In 2013, I had the life-changing opportunity to participate in the International Training Programme (ITP) at the British Museum. That experience didn't just shape my professional path; it helped define it. It opened doors, gave me confidence, and connected me to a global network of inspiring museum professionals. Since then I've carried the lessons and memories from the ITP with me throughout my career.

This summer, I proudly marked 12 years as an ITP alumnus. More than a decade of growth, collaboration, and continued connection to a programme that remains central to my professional identity.

I'm also thrilled to share another major milestone. I had the privilege of participating in the Turkish Archaeology Summer School, organized by the Yunus Emre Institute. Visiting Turkey and exploring its extraordinary archaeological heritage has been a long-held dream and this programme made it happen. We travelled through six historically rich cities over 10 days: Çanakkale, İzmir, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Ankara, and Istanbul. We visited more than 20 archaeological and cultural sites, including excavation areas, ancient cities, and some of the world's most renowned museums. It was an intense and unforgettable journey of learning, discovery, and connection with the deep layers of human history preserved in Turkey's landscape.

In Çanakkale, we visited the Gallipoli Historical Site, Troy Ancient City, the brilliant Troy Museum, and the Korfmann Library. Being in Troy, where myth meets reality, was truly unforgettable. In İzmir, we explored Ephesus, Smyrna Agora, Teos Excavation Area, and the İzmir Culture and Art Factory, where historical narrative meets modern creativity.

Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa gave us access to the roots of early civilization. We marvelled at the mosaics in the Zeugma Mosaic Museum, then stood at Göbeklitepe and Karahantepe, the oldest temple sites in the world, changing everything we know about prehistory. The Şanlıurfa Museum added rich context to these awe-inspiring places. In Ankara we visited Anıtkabir, Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, and Ankara Castle, discovering how Turkey connects ancient and modern legacies.

Finally, Istanbul left me speechless. From Topkapı Palace to Hagia Sophia, from the Istanbul Archaeological Museum to the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Naval Museum, and Galata Mevlevi House, every site told a unique story about the empires and cultures that shaped this incredible city.

What made this programme truly special was the people. I had the privilege of joining a multicultural group of participants from across the globe: Iran, India, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Albania, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Denmark, Canada, Mexico, Kosovo, Georgia, and Latvia. It was such a rich exchange, not just about Turkish history and heritage, but also about each other's countries, institutions, and cultures. We shared experiences, ideas, and a lot of laughter. That kind of dialogue is rare and deeply meaningful.

This programme has given me fresh insights into how Turkey is preserving its cultural heritage while using modern technology to enhance the visitor experience. I was particularly impressed by how museums are adopting digital tools and creative storytelling to bring the past to life in engaging, accessible ways. It's something I hope to reflect in my own work going forward.

On a personal note, visiting Turkey was something I had dreamed of for years. To finally be there, walking through ancient ruins, learning from experts, and connecting with colleagues from around the world was deeply fulfilling.

As I reflect on this milestone, I can't help but look back to where it all began: the International Training Programme at the British Museum. It was the ITP that gave me my first international museum experience, that taught me to think more broadly, and that inspired me to seek out opportunities like this one.

To the ITP team and my ITP peers, you had the first hand in making this dream possible. Thank you for setting me on this path. Here's to continuing the journey of learning, sharing, and preserving our shared human story.

Hadeer Belal
Registrar
Egyptian Museum, Cairo
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2013



Image of Ephesus:
©Yunus Emre Institute, Archaeology Summer School 2025, the Library of Celsus in the Ancient City of Ephesus.

Hadeer Belal, Egypt, ITP Fellow 2013.



Displays from the *Daedalus: Legend of Crete* exhibition at the Palace Museum.

Colleagues from Heraklion Archaeological Museum preparing objects for display in the exhibition.

Cross cultural cooperation facilitating new ideas

My experience in the ITP deeply shaped my understanding of international museum collaboration. This influence was clearly reflected in the special exhibition *Daedalus: Legend of Crete*, which I curated at the Palace Museum in partnership with the Heraklion Archaeological Museum in 2025. This project served as a vivid example of how cross-border cooperation facilitates the mutual sharing of resources and ideas, creating lasting value for both institutions.

The collaboration was built on complementary resources. The Greek side provided 172 precious Minoan artefacts, forming the core of the exhibition, while our side contributed the Palace Museum's exhibition space, research expertise, and 13 Chinese artefacts from a comparable historical period for cross-cultural comparison. This exchange not only allowed Chinese audiences to enjoy the splendours of Aegean civilisation but also offered the Greek collection a new interpretive context on a significant international platform.

The true challenge and reward, however, lay in the co-creation of narrative and presentation. Making the distant Greek myths accessible and resonant for a Chinese audience was the central curatorial task. Drawing on the cross-cultural narrative skills emphasized during my ITP training, our team worked closely with Greek colleagues to develop a dual "myth-history" narrative structure. Alongside the mythological storyline, we presented an evidence-based archaeological interpretation of the civilization. We also employed thoughtful cultural analogies, referring to Linear B script as the "Oracle Bones of the Mediterranean" and Daedalus as the "Lu Ban of Crete"; localized interpretations that bridged the understanding gap for our visitors and demonstrated a deep integration of creative perspectives.

This partnership brought multiple benefits to both museums. The Heraklion Archaeological Museum gained unprecedented visibility and interpretative depth for its collection in China. For the Palace Museum, successfully presenting a civilization so distant in time and space significantly expanded our curatorial capacity and international presence. Notably, the spatial narrative rhythm and visual design developed during the collaboration were also appreciated by our Greek counterparts; a clear sign that our cooperation was working successfully.

Reflecting on this project, the ITP equipped me with more than just a global perspective and professional methodology; it instilled a working approach that promotes equitable dialogue and knowledge sharing. It enabled me to effectively build bridges of cross-cultural understanding on a platform like the Palace Museum. This experience shows that meaningful international collaboration is about much more than sharing objects. It's about exchanging ideas, creating new understanding together, and ultimately benefiting both museums and the audiences they serve.

Haikun Bo
Curator
The Palace Museum
China, ITP Fellow 2008

20 years of ITP legacy projects



After completing the ITP annual programme, fellows become part of an active global network that supports ongoing collaboration and engagement. The ITP continues to provide opportunities for further training, research and development through courses, conferences, collaborative projects and knowledge exchange initiatives.

Philanthropic support from the Marie Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust enabled the ITP to deliver a range of legacy projects that are essential to the objectives of the ITP. Providing fellows with opportunities for continued learning, collaboration and professional growth is a key priority of the ITP.

Over the past 20 years, legacy projects have taken many forms, including independent research projects, participation in international conferences, knowledge exchange programmes, and specialised professional development training.

Legacy projects have also created opportunities for the ITP to collaborate with museums and heritage institutions across the UK, allowing fellows to broaden their understanding of the UK museum sector. Since 2016, more than 40 fellows have attended the Museums Association annual conference with the ITP, gaining exposure to the diversity and innovation within the UK museum community. International partnerships have also developed through programmes delivered with partner institutions in India, Armenia, and Egypt.

A defining feature of the ITP's legacy projects is their responsiveness to fellows' feedback and to evolving challenges within the global museum and heritage sector. In 2016, a survey of ITP fellows identified priority areas for further training, leading to the development of five-day ITP+ workshops focused on key themes. Fellows highlighted exhibitions and display, museum strategy, planning and leadership, and education and children's programmes as their top areas for further professional development.

In December 2025 a similar needs assessment survey was conducted across the ITP network, with fellows identifying international engagement and partnerships; collection documentation and storage; and co-curation and co-production as the most important areas for further training.

The findings from this survey will inform the development of future legacy projects, ensuring that the ITP continues to provide meaningful opportunities for learning, collaboration and professional exchange across the global network.

Amelia Kedge
International Training Programme Coordinator (Legacy Projects)
British Museum

ICOM UK
Conference
Fellows 2024

MA Conference
Fellows Leeds
2024.

MA Conference
Fellows Gateshead
2023.

ITP Fellows at
the ICOM UK
Conference 2025.

ITP+ Aswan 2018.



Post-British Museum International Training Programme: Experiences and Impact

I participated in the British Museum International Training Programme in 2023. As a museum professional, the programme was enriching and rewarding. It broadened my knowledge in conservation of cultural heritage and other aspects of a museum's role in society. In this regard, I would like to highlight three key areas: conservation, community engagement, and research.

During my stay at the BM, I learnt about conservation of museum collections, and metal conservation was of particular interest to me. This is because the museum where I work as a conservator has a good number of copper-alloy objects. I learnt about the different types of patina and the mechanical methods of conserving such objects. These methods are used presently in conserving the Igbo-Ukwu corpus and the Benin bronzes in National Museum, Lagos.

The different ways that the British Museum engages with society was explained to Fellows during the programme. From the training, I got an insight on how to engage with indigenous communities and makers of indigenous objects in carrying out my duties. Conservation of museum objects, especially ethnographic objects, is not only about having the skills to do the job but also having knowledge about the material composition of the object and its function in society. Knowing this will help the conservator to know the right materials to use for restorations and the elements/features on the objects which must not be erased. After the programme, I started engaging with indigenous communities to learn about the wooden and leather objects in the museum as well as the indigenous, sustainable methods of preserving them. I engaged with wood carvers from the Yoruba ethnic group and leatherworkers from the Hausa ethnic group to learn about indigenous methods of conserving wooden and leather objects.

I am very happy to have participated in the ITP. All that I learnt and the experiences I had improved my professional practice and made a positive impact at my place of work (National Museum, Lagos).

Ogechukwu Elizabeth Okpalanozie
Assistant Director
National Commission for Museums and Monuments
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2023



Mechanical cleaning of Igbo-Ukwu bronze roped pot.

A transformative professional journey

In 2016 I was selected as an ITP Fellow after applying three years in a row. I reached the short list each year but was chosen on my third application. That selection interview marked the beginning of a transformative professional journey. After the interview that led to my selection, I travelled to the UK to take part in the intensive ITP programme. The course lasted 40 days, with an additional two-week placement in Manchester. During this period, I gained practical museological knowledge, new skills in exhibit development and curation, and formed close professional friendships with participants from many countries.

On returning to Egypt, I gave a full presentation to my colleagues about the ITP programme and encouraged them to apply. Since then, I have regularly advised anyone who asks about the ITP and supported applicants.

My first major opportunity to apply what I learned was the museum's first temporary exhibition, opened in February 2017. Although the museum had not yet officially opened, we staged this important show, which was inaugurated by Dr. Khaled El-Enany (Ministry of Antiquities) and Ms. Irina Bokova (UNESCO). I used the curatorial and display methods learned during the ITP in planning and installing this exhibition.

The museum project continued through challenging years, including the COVID-19 period. I worked closely with the museum team and the lead designer over the following years. The museum officially opened on 3 April 2021 with a major ceremony including the Golden Parade. The knowledge, confidence, and professional network gained through ITP were instrumental in overcoming the long-running challenges of preparing the museum (a project I had been involved in since 2004) and successfully opening in 2021.

ITP support has extended well beyond the initial course. I have participated in conferences and training across Egypt (including Aswan), at the International



Congress of Egyptology in Leiden, and most recently in the Legacy Project conference held in Cardiff in October 2025. These opportunities widened my professional network, informed my curatorial practice, and reinforced the value of international collaboration.

When I applied to ITP in 2016, I was a Curator at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization. Today I serve as Director of Museum Display at the same institution. I attribute much of this professional growth to the skills, confidence, and networks provided by the ITP programme. The ITP programme has had a lasting and profound impact on my career, my museum's development, and my contribution to the museum sector in Egypt. I am grateful for the support I received, and I wish the programme continued success under the leadership of Claire Messenger and all involved.

Sayed Abuefadel Othman Ahmed
Director of Museum Display Department
National Museum of Egyptian Civilization
Egypt, ITP Fellow 2016



Sayed (centre) during ITP 2016.

Sayed with ITP colleagues at the 2025 Museums Association Conference, Cardiff.

The power of collaboration: bringing meaning and life to collection

When I began working in museums a decade ago, I believed that high-quality, well-preserved collections were what made a museum truly great. As a curator, my dream was to safeguard every object perfectly. Yet over time, through countless conversations with visitors and colleagues, I realized something was missing: life. Our objects, no matter how carefully preserved or how beautifully they appeared behind glass cases, were often perceived as relics of the past, disconnected from the present. Many were still part of living traditions, still in use, yet this vitality was absent from the way we presented them.

A few years later, during the closing ceremony of the Holidays in Museums programme, one of the children's coaches requested materials for a performance. Among them, he specifically asked for impuzu (bark cloth), insisting it be authentic. Because the skills required to make bark cloth are increasingly endangered, it was difficult to find one on the local market, but we had preserved examples in storage. When the performance finally took place, it was extraordinary. In that moment, it became clear to me that a museum's true power lies not only in its collections but in bringing them to life; connecting past and present, objects and people, stories and lived experiences.

Great museums are built on the strength of their collections and on the power of collaboration. Collections gain meaning through shared knowledge, multiple interpretations, and collective care. When museums collaborate across institutions, disciplines, and borders, they move beyond isolation and become active participants in a global exchange of ideas, experiences, and responsibilities. Ultimately, collaboration connects local knowledge to global conversations. Individual institutions remain rooted in their communities while contributing their insights, histories, and expertise to a wider ecosystem. This reciprocal exchange strengthens both individual museums and the global museum field, ensuring that knowledge production is more inclusive, diverse, and representative of multiple worldviews.

Embracing partnerships is essential for encouraging diversity of thought because no single museum, discipline, or professional perspective can fully represent the complexity of human experience. Collaboration brings together institutions, communities, artists, scholars, and practitioners with different cultural backgrounds, knowledge systems, and lived experiences. This exchange challenges dominant narratives, broadens interpretation, and creates space for alternative voices, leading to more creative, relevant, and innovative museum practices.

Collaboration is also key to addressing complex challenges within the cultural sector, such as decolonization, sustainability, digitization, accessibility, and climate change. These issues require interdisciplinary approaches and shared responsibility. By pooling resources, expertise, and ideas, museums can experiment with new models, learn from one another, and develop solutions that are both context-sensitive and scalable, particularly benefiting institutions with limited resources.

Yes, great museums are built not just on what they hold, but on how they connect with people, communities, and other institutions. Collections provide the “what,” collaboration provides the “how,” and together they create relevance, innovation, and impact. In this way, collaboration transforms museums from isolated repositories into active platforms for dialogue, learning, and collective knowledge-making.

Chantal Umuhoza
Curator
Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy
Rwanda, ITP Fellow 2018 & Senior Fellow 2025



Traditional impuzu (bark cloth) worn during the closing ceremony performance of the Holidays in Museums programme.



A bridge between past and future

As an ITP Fellow (2022), being part of this international community has had a real and lasting impact on my professional practice and on the work of my institution. Exposure to global perspectives, shared expertise, and collaborative thinking encouraged me to rethink how museum education can more meaningfully connect with schools, families, and young people. One of the most impactful lessons I learned was how to effectively engage students and their families as active participants in the learning process. I translated this learning into action by developing and implementing a project titled *A Bridge Between Past and Future*. This initiative was designed to connect the school curriculum with real cultural experiences inside the museum through hands-on workshops, guided inquiry, and student-led creative projects.

A Bridge Between Past and Future is an innovative museum education project that connects the school curriculum with hands-on cultural experiences in the museum. Through inquiry-based workshops and student-led creative projects, it deepens students' understanding of heritage while developing critical skills such as thinking, communication, collaboration, research, and creativity. The project actively engages families as partners in learning and culminates in student presentations that celebrate inclusive, experiential education for youth from diverse backgrounds, including participants from Almadar & Doroub Schools.

The project aimed to move students beyond textbook learning by linking identity with cultural heritage, using museums as creative learning spaces, and developing future skills through real-world application. Students explored themes in history, archaeology, art, and local heritage, creating personalized projects that reflected their learning journeys.

The learning process followed a step-by-step, experiential approach that began with guided exploration of the Jordan Museum and topic selection based on students' interests. Through research using exhibits, resources, and curator interviews, students engaged in investigative learning, then transformed their findings into creative outputs such as models, storytelling, and artistic interpretations. The process included peer feedback and refinement, culminating in a public showcase where students confidently presented their projects to families, educators, and museum audiences.

By the end of the project, students showed significant growth, gaining research and critical thinking skills, creative problem-solving, confidence in public speaking, stronger teamwork and communication, and a deeper connection to their cultural identity. As one student reflected, *'History is not just in books; it's part of who we are and can be shared in our own way.'*

Another student summed it up perfectly when she said, *'Now I understand that history is not just in books. It's part of who we are and we can tell it in our own way. The Jordan Museum became something more than a museum. It became a stage for creativity, a classroom for experience, and a bridge between the stories of the past and the imaginations of the future.'*

This project built a bridge between institutions and individuals, knowledge and emotion, memory and vision. We are proud to play a meaningful role in the educational journeys of these bright young learners and we're even more proud to be part of a movement that sees museums as engines of youth empowerment, future skills, and education for all.

Mohammad Al-Qaisi
Education Manager
The Jordan Museum
Jordan, ITP Fellow 2022

Active involves families as partners in the learning journey.



**Decolonising museum collections:
the way forward for inclusiveness**

Decolonization is a global trend in the museum sector, which has led to some museums in the West repatriating collections to their indigenous communities. These actions are responses to the legacy of colonization, during which colonial masters, missionaries, and, in some cases, local intermediaries took advantage of the situation to loot collections from their countries of origin. These collections represented the heritage and civilizations of indigenous people. Colonization exerted control and power over indigenous populations and where colonization occurred, decolonization must follow.

Decolonization means returning power and authority to the people. It creates space for truth-telling about how collections were acquired and who rightfully owns them. It also means amplifying the voices of local communities whose heritage is stored and exhibited in museums, ensuring their perspectives are heard and respected.

Museum collections consist of objects of historical, scientific, artistic, religious, and cultural significance that define the heritage of a people. They showcase creativity, culture, rituals, religions, and traditions, and they reflect the interaction between humans and their environment. Such objects are documented, conserved, and exhibited in museums for posterity, research, education, memory, entertainment, and public enjoyment.

Before colonial rule, African societies preserved collections within shrines, palaces, groves, households, and sacred spaces. Family heads and priests served as the “curators” of these collections. The concept and term “museum” came into use in Nigeria during the colonial era, as was likely the case in other colonized nations. The establishment of museums in Nigeria by the colonial government was initiated by K. C. Murray, a European art teacher. He was concerned about the illegal trafficking of Nigerian cultural objects and advocated for laws to curb this practice. This led to the establishment of the Nigerian Antiquities Service in 1943. Objects seized from looters and traffickers, as well as excavated materials, were stored by this department.

Over time, new legislation led to the dissolution of the Nigerian Antiquities Service, which was replaced by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). Murray became the first Director-General of the NCMM. As a result, African museums largely followed European models, which often detached Nigerian museums from their communities and made museum practice more exclusive.

It is essential for museum professionals to see themselves as custodians of collections held in trust for the public, rather than as absolute authorities or owners. It is long overdue to empower communities and indigenous peoples to take the lead in interpreting and teaching their heritage, while professionals play supportive and supervisory roles; and learn in the process. Until this happens, museum professionals risk continuing the colonization of heritage by confining collections behind glass cases and in storage rooms.

Decolonizing museum collections goes beyond repatriating illegally acquired objects to their rightful owners. It also requires professionals to decolonize their thinking and practices regarding ownership and control. Museums worldwide must take a holistic look at how well they allow indigenous peoples and source communities to interact with their history, fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

National museums in Nigeria were once largely exclusive but this narrative is gradually changing. Several museums have introduced inclusive programs that enable communities to engage directly with collections. For example, the Igbo-Ukwu communities from southeastern Nigeria have visited the National Museum, Lagos, to access and interact with the Igbo-Ukwu bronzes from their region. Similarly, communities of Austrian lace and Aso-oke traders from Balogun Market in Lagos engaged with historic Aso-oke textiles and Austrian laces (some over 50 years old) collected by the National Museum, Lagos. This engagement celebrated the bilateral trade relationship between Nigeria and Austria in the context of fashion.

The National Museum of Unity, Ibadan, has also displayed collections from minority groups in Nigeria and organized dedicated days for community interaction and dialogue. Persons with disabilities have likewise participated in dialogue and engagement programs at the Unity Museum. These initiatives can only improve when professionals grant communities greater access, engagement, and partnership opportunities.

The benefits of decolonizing museum collections are immense. It gives room for inclusiveness by allowing communities to lead while professionals guide and support the process. It helps museum professionals gain deeper knowledge of their collections, including diverse uses and meanings that may not be documented. Community engagement also reveals intangible aspects of collections that curators, archaeologists, conservators, and ethnographers may not fully understand.

Decolonization enables indigenous peoples to tell their own stories and interpret collections accurately, reducing errors in exhibition-making and encouraging co-curation.

When communities see exhibitions they have co-curated, they develop a strong sense of belonging and are more likely to invite friends and family, increasing museum patronage. Addressing difficult or contested histories also becomes easier when communities are given safe spaces to express their perspectives without fear of judgment.

It is important to remember that many museum collections once existed in temples, households, and shrines belonging to families and communities. These objects had specific traditional methods of care and conservation. Allowing communities access to and interaction with museum collections can shed light on indigenous conservation practices, helping museums reduce reliance on costly modern conservation methods. Examples include the conservation of Indian saris with local herbs in Asian museums and the use of palm wine (local alcohol) to preserve raffia collections in Nigeria. Such practices resonate strongly with local communities. Additionally, labelling objects in the indigenous languages of their origin enhances a sense of ownership and belonging.

Museums have an obligation to tell truthful stories through their collections and to build meaningful relationships and partnerships with local communities. This responsibility cannot be fulfilled in isolation; through collaboration museums can achieve inclusiveness and relevance more effectively.

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade
Chief Conservator
Unity Museum
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2022



Beatrice Bamigbade during the 2022 ITP Annual Programme.

Beatrice with Cynthia Iroube (Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2010).

A whole global network of ITP memories!

In 2025 the ITP team commissioned an impact survey of the British Museum's International Training Programme. To do this we approached Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd who have been evaluating the annual programme since 2013. Annabel was able to give us an external, objective view of the responses but one that sits alongside 12 years of background knowledge of the programme and our network.

The survey received 161 responses from the 342 fellows giving us a response rate of 47% which the report tells us is an excellent sample for a training programme follow up survey, especially one dating back 19 years.

We were delighted to hear from so many in our ITP network and were so grateful that they took the time to complete the survey and share their thoughts with us.

Some key highlights for us were:

- 84% of respondents said that their promotion was the result of skills, experience or status gained on the ITP programme.
- 97% of respondents said they shared the learning from the ITP programme, with 92% sharing their learning with other museums and the wider heritage community.
- 96% of respondents said there is no international museum network that is more important to them than the ITP.

Perhaps most importantly for the ITP team, 97% of respondents said they still feel they have a relationship with the British Museum. That is wonderful because as someone who has worked on the ITP since its inception in 2006, I feel that connection too. This positive feedback not only confirms the commitment of Museum staff and our partners across the UK, to working with colleagues around the world but it clearly demonstrates the strong professional and profound personal relationships made with each year's cohort.

'Being part of the ITP network is extremely important to me. The network represents a valuable community of like-minded professionals, passionate about heritage and dedicated to advancing best practices globally. It provides me with ongoing opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and professional development. I greatly value the connections I have made and look forward to continuing to learn from and contribute to this incredible network.'
Anonymous feedback, ITP Impact Report 2025

Claire Messenger
Manager, International Training Programme



ITP Fellows from the past 20 years enjoying time together.

A day out in Cambridge

I have fond memories of the 2022 Annual Programme, one of which was our day out in Cambridge. I was captivated by many collections at the Fitzwilliam Museum such as pottery works by Lady Ladi Kwali, a renowned potter from Nigeria and some soft rock collections. All the fellows had a lot to see and learn and so did I. The soft rock collections were quite similar to the Esie soap stones my museum has. I was engrossed reading the text labels, noting similarities with what I have back home. I didn't know my group had left for the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology and they had gotten their before realising I wasn't with them. They had taken a photo in front of Fitzwilliam Museum before leaving. They checked the photo and realised I was not in the photo. It dawned on the team and the fellows I was still at the museum. Oh! Roshan Mishra (2022 Senior Fellow) had to take a long walk back to the museum. He found me in the gallery, he said, we left long ago! How did that happen? I was surprised. I didn't know they had left!

I also had the privilege to work at the inorganic conservation laboratory for a day. I took part in several activities. But restoring a broken flower vase was the most memorable of all. A staff at the laboratory guided me through the processes. It was quite intensive but I enjoyed the day and I was able to restore a broken flower vase. This memory stays with me.

Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade
Chief Conservator
Unity Museum
Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2022



Joining the Conversation: Discovering a 20-year Global Network

I can only describe joining a global network with a twenty-year history as stepping into an ongoing conversation – one which has sparked ideas, collaborations and friendships across museums and continents. Since joining in September, I've had the privilege of getting to know a community that has spent two decades connecting museum professionals through curiosity, collaboration and a shared belief in the power of museums.

The global reach of the ITP network is particularly special. The conversations in which I've had the pleasure of joining stretch far beyond individual institutions or countries – they bring together perspectives from across the world. In an ever-evolving sector, these exchanges create space to learn from varied approaches, contexts, and experiences. Whether discussing audience engagement, collections care or the future role of museums – the network reminds us that the most valuable insights stem from conversation and exchange, collaboration and co-creation.

One of my earliest memories in this role was attending the Museums Association Conference in Cardiff. This was a particularly special experience, as not only did I meet fellows for the first time, but I could share my own cultural knowledge of my home country. These conversations varied from exchanging language lessons with one another, to sharing the industrial histories of Wales with fellows at Big Pit National Coal Mining Museum. Attending the conference as a new member of the team offered a first glimpse into the relationships that have grown over the past twenty years – and conversations with fellows and museum colleagues from across the UK and beyond quickly revealed the warmth, openness, and intellectual curiosity that define the network.

Celebrating twenty years of this global network is a celebration of connection: far-reaching relationships, shared learning, and the collaborative spirit that has sustained it. Six months in, I feel like I'm only just beginning to discover the depth of this community which makes the prospect of the next twenty years even more exciting.

Caitlin Noble
International Training Programme Assistant
British Museum

Restoring a broken flower vase in the British Museum's inorganic conservation laboratory.

Participants from ITP 2016.

Remembering those who made such an impact on the ITP global network



The International Training Programme has been defined not only by the professional network it builds, but by the genuine friendships and connections it helps to create. As we celebrate 20 years of the ITP and 20 years of connection and collaboration, we also pause to remember those members of our network who are no longer with us. Their presence helped shape the ITP global network, and their contributions, both professionally and personally, continue to be felt through the relationships we share today.

Mariem Danial (Egypt, ITP Fellow 2017) joined the ITP in the summer of 2017, while she was worked as a curator at the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Mariem had a passion for creating engaging museum experiences for children and brought this important experience and perspective to the global network.

Mahesh Kalra (India, ITP Fellow 2013) joined the ITP in 2013 and at the time was a curator and lecturer at the Dinesh Modi Institute at the University of Mumbai. He also attended the ITP Mumbai Workshop, *Creating Museums of World Stories*, in November 2015 and in 2017 we were delighted to welcome him back to the British Museum to participate in the first ITP+ Course on *temporary exhibitions and permanent displays*. Mahesh was a passionate scholar and dear friend to many members of our alumni across the globe.

Saeed Obaid Ba Yashoot (Yemen, ITP Fellow 2016) joined the ITP in the summer of 2016. He worked for Seiyun Museum and was the first member of the ITP global network from Yemen. Saeed was an active and enthusiastic member of the ITP network, who endeavoured to stay connected with the friends and colleagues he made in 2016.

Buket Babatas Aydin (Turkiye, ITP Fellow 2019) joined us on the ITP as an independent researcher. Buket's experience of archaeology, excavations and museums meant that she brought valuable experience and insight to her ITP 2019 colleagues. Buket was dedicated, energetic and enthusiastic - a kind and thoughtful colleague and friend, who supported and encouraging those around her.

Eunice Barminas (Nigeria, ITP Fellow 2012) joined the ITP in 2012 and was Assistant Chief Museum Education Officer and National Museum Jos, Nigeria. She was delighted to gain deeper insight into the workings of museums and other cultural heritage institutions in the UK and around the world during her ITP experience. Eunice was always happy to share her knowledge and experiences with her sector colleagues, and her kind nature and infectious humour made the 2012 programme such a joy.

Ross Thomas was Curator of Roman Collections in the British Museum's Department of Greece and Rome and a long-time ITP departmental representative. Ross was a passionate supporter of the ITP and is fondly remembered by fellows who worked with him.

Ian Jenkins, alongside many decades of dedicated service to the British Museum, was a huge supporter of the ITP. His tours of the Enlightenment Gallery and discussions on the histories of collection were always highlights of the annual programme. Ian also took part in ITP legacy projects, including working closely with ITP alumni Barbara Vujanovic (Croatia, ITP Fellow 2016) on a spotlight loan, *Rodin: rethinking the fragment*.

And many of our fellows will remember **Kusuma Barnett**, former Head of Volunteers at the British Museum, as one of the first people who welcomed them to the British Museum with a tour of the galleries. Kusuma was part of the ITP from the very start – supporting the creation of the programme and the development of tours for our ITP fellows on their first days in the museum. Kusuma's tours were inspiring and insightful. Rather than focussing on the highlights of the collection, the tours were carefully crafted, showcasing objects that told a story about the Museum, both past and present. She loved to consider where our fellows came from and give time and space for them to connect with their own cultures and always encouraged them to talk about objects and tell their own stories.

George Peckham
International Training Programme Coordinator
(Annual Programme), British Museum

ITP Senior Fellow 2026

I joined the Sarawak Museum Department as Head of Administration and Finance in 2010 and eventually moved on to lead the Ethnology and Collections Management Section. Later, I was appointed Head of the Collections Management Division when museum collections were merged into one division. In this role, I oversaw an extensive collection of 402,256 items encompasses zoology, archaeology, ethnology, historical documents, audiovisual materials, and photographs. During my tenure, I strengthened standards in registration, acquisition, documentation, and conservation. I also led the drafting of the Procedures for Management of Movable Heritage Assets that would become as a state circular if approved. Besides that, I delivered public talks on museum objects, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage preservation, the role of collections in shaping identity, and the need for object conservation.



Now returning as an ITP Senior Fellow, I am delighted for the opportunity to serve as an external mentor to a new generation of ITP participants. Reflecting on my journey, I stand at the intersection of collections management expertise, native customs and traditions, ethnographic field experiences, senior leadership, and international professional exposures, particularly through ITP. I aim to inspire the ITP 2026 participants who are the future leaders in their organisations by bridging these areas to expand their knowledge and contributing to the growing body of knowledge in museum and heritage management. Finally, I hope we will create a strong global network and connections that support future collaboration.

Dora Jok
Head of Orang Ulu Research Section,
Council for Native Customs & Traditions, Sarawak
Malaysia, ITP Fellow



Dora Jok during ITP 2016.



Porcelain and Painting

During my career as curator I have managed numerous art works, paintings on paper and porcelain. I researched the makers, their subjects and their techniques. I loved the porcelain dishes painted by two artists; ZHAO Shao-an and YANG Shanshen, both famous local ink painters. They also painted porcelain dishes provided by a local pottery workshop, Yuet Tung China Works. After firing, these works became enduring evidence of their art and friendship. In fact, I have told this story in an exhibition "Painting and Porcelain" in 2018.

After retirement I tried my hand at the craft and learned to paint on porcelain. Now in my new role as the maker, I have more technical concerns, such as how to draw a fine outline, how to achieve the effect of colour gradation, and how to keep a pigment consistent in texture. This direct involvement in the process of creating adds one more dimension to my life-long encounter with ceramics.

Rose Lee
Hong Kong, ITP Fellow 2008



Pre-colonial gold objects from Ayala Museum and Vicky Amalingan-Sales collections and *Likha* from the Museo Enrique Zobel Collection (object at right of pre-colonial gold showcase) photo courtesy of Colegio de San Ildefonso.

Rose and her dish *The Three Plenties*.

Somos Pacifico: The Acapulco-Manila Galleon exhibition

Select objects from the following Philippine collections: Ayala Museum, Intramuros Administration, Museo Enrique Zóbel (Calatagan, Batangas), Richard and Sandra Lopez, Paulino and Hetty Que, Vicky Amalingan-Sales, Fernando and Catherine Zóbel de Ayala, and the Gilbert Zuellig Memorial Library, Manila are featured in the exhibition *Somos Pacifico: The Acapulco-Manila Galleon* exhibition at the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City from 4 December 2025 to 31 May 2026. This exhibition is an expanded and enriched iteration of the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)'s *Manila Galleon: From Asia to the Americas*—curated by Clement Onn, ACM Director—presented at the ACM from November 2023 to March 2024.

With more than 300 objects drawn from national and international collections in the Philippines, Singapore, and Mexico, the exhibition traces the cultural heritage connecting Mexico and the Philippines through the Manila Galleon maritime route, which crossed the Pacific Ocean for 250 years, from 1565 to 1815. Objects such as maps, paintings, prints, wooden chests, religious artefacts, ceramics, navigational instruments, and textiles weave an intercultural narrative between Acapulco and Manila that shaped the economic, social, and political dynamics of both places.

The Philippine participation was made possible through the collaboration of the Embassy of Mexico in the Philippines and the generosity of Ayala Corporation, Ayala Foundation, Inc., the Gilbert Zuellig Memorial Library, Manila, and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Ayala Museum also collaborated closely with the Colegio de San Ildefonso in bringing the Philippine collection to Mexico.

Aprille Tijam
Associate Director and
Head of Exhibitions and Collections
Ayala Museum
Philippines, ITP Fellow 2019

ITP catch-ups

An ITP catch-up in the UK and China

Bill Griffiths, Head of Programmes and Collections at North East Museums met with **Gao Rui** (China, ITP 2023) at Discovery Museum in Newcastle. Bill also had the chance to reconnect with **Wang Chaoxiang** (China, ITP 2024) during a work trip to China.

An ITP catch-up in the UK

Chantal Umuhoza (Rwanda, ITP 2018 & Senior Fellow 2025) had the opportunity to meet with Pat Allen, formerly Curator of World Cultures at Glasgow Museums Scotland during the ITP annual programme 2025.

An ITP catch-up in the UK

Kayla Ku’ualoha Fernandez (Hawai’i, USA, ITP 2023) and Nguyen Hai Ninh (Vietnam, ITP 2023) enjoyed a surprise meeting in London in 2026. Their meeting clearly demonstrated the joys of our ITP WhatsApp groups and the ability to keep connecting wherever you are in the world – even when you least expect it!!

An ITP catch-up in Kathmandu

Nguyen Hai Ninh (Vietnam, ITP 2023) and Roshan Mishra (Nepal, ITP 2018) met in Kathmandu when Ninh attended and presented at the International Conference on the Recovery of Cultural Heritage 2025.

An ITP catch-up in China

Nachanok Paint Wongkhaluang (Thailand, ITP 2025) met with Mei Dong (China, ITP 2013) during a trip to China.

An ITP catch-up in Lima

Yanoa Pomalima Carrasco (Peru, ITP 2022 & Senior Fellow 2024) met with Louise de Mello, Project Curator for the Santo Domingo Centre at the British Museum in Lima and enjoyed visiting an Amazonian community for the day.

An ITP catch-up in Beirut

Marie-Antoinette Gemayel (Lebanon, ITP 2016) met with Maria-Gabriella Micale, British Museum Curator: Ancient Levant and Syria in Beirut.



Aprille P. Tijam (ITP 2019 Philippines) was appointed by the Philippine government as one of the members of the Board of Trustees of the Nayong Pilipino Foundation, Inc., a government-owned or controlled corporation, created by Presidential Decree 37 to promote, encourage and initiate research and development projects and activities in social sciences, humanities, social and amelioration, and allied fields. Together with other board members, Aprille took her oath before the Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco on 9 June 2025. In photo above from left to right: Atty. Gezzez Giezl Granado, Aprille Tijam, former Executive Director Gertie Duran-Batocabe, Secretary Frasco, Architect Christina Enriquez, Leonila Fabul, and Dr. Hobart Savior.

In 2025, Aprille was also elected as member of the board of the International Council of Museums-Philippines (ICOM Philippines).

In November 2025 a new book was launched titled *Hadrian’s Wall and its Trees*, edited by David Breeze. **Bill Griffiths**, Head of Programmes and Collections at North East Museums wrote a short piece for the book which was illustrated by a lovely photograph of ITP Fellows at Segedunum Roman Fort & Museum during the ITP annual programme 2024.

We would also like to say a huge thank you and goodbye to British Museum colleague **Zeina Klink-Hoppe**, Curator for the Modern Middle East who has moved on to new adventures. We will miss Zeina, who has been an important part of our BM ITP team, and we wish her lots of luck in the future.



Nayong Pilipino Board of Trustee Member. Photograph sourced from Philippine Department of Tourism – Facebook page.

A number of our ITP Fellows have new roles since they attended the ITP Annual Programme, and we would like to send our congratulations to the following people:

Ahmed Hemida (Egypt, ITP 2016) who is now the Head of the Museums Sector in Egypt.

Vinay Kumar Singh (India, ITP 2024) who is now Director of the State Museum Lucknow.

Mohamed Aymen Chihaoui (Tunisia, ITP 2023) who became the Heritage Custodian of Monastir City – now looking after 5 museums, 4 archaeological sites, more than 10 historical monuments and 4 storage sites.

Sayan Bhattacharya (India, ITP 2009) who was recently appointed Director of the Indian Museum, Kolkata. Sayan will be the youngest Director of the Indian Museum (India's oldest Museum).

Omnia Zaghlol (Egypt, ITP 2022) who became Museum Deputy at Alexandria National Museum towards the end of 2025.

Dikko Idris (Nigeria, ITP 2011) who transferred from Rock Art Interpretation Centre to National Museums Kaduna as Curator in-charge, in October 2025.

Ivan Radman (Croatia, ITP 2018) who became the director of the Archaeological Museum, Zagreb, in 2023.

Rema Zeynalova (Azerbaijan, ITP 2018) who has been working as the Head of the International Relations Department at the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art since March 2024. Rema has coordinated several international exhibitions since then, including *Western Azerbaijan in Our Cultural Memory* held in collaboration with the Ankara Art and Sculpture Museum from May-July 2025; *Sattar Bahlulzadeh – Creator of Invisible World* held in collaboration with the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus from September – November 2025 at the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus; and *Diego Rivera: The Promise for Better Future* held in collaboration with the Diego Rivera Anahuacalli Museum from October to December 2025 at the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art.

Nagwa Bakr (Egypt, ITP 2019) who became the Director of the Training Department at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation (NMEC). In November 2025, Nagwa also presented a research paper with the CAMOC Committee titled *Where the City Speaks: People, Memory and the Intangible Heritage of Al-Muizz Street, Cairo*.

Alsu Akhmetzyanova (Uzbekistan, ITP 2019) who was Assistant Curator for the first Uzbekistan Pavilion at the London Design Biennale 2025, and Project Manager for Uzbekistan's first National Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

ITP 2018 at Sutton Hoo.



And congratulations to...

Huzoor Nand Choudhry (India, ITP 2008) who designed the Indore Cricket Museum, Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association. From the colour palette and visual storytelling to lighting systems, signage, display curation, and spatial choreography, Huzoor crafted an environment that balances modern museum sensibilities with the emotional gravity of India's cricketing heritage. His role extended far beyond the galleries; he designed the outdoor zones, the cafeteria, its seating areas, the landscaped surroundings, and the elegantly styled souvenir shop. Each element was planned to ensure visitors enjoy a seamless and memorable experience from entry to exit.

Joyee Roy (India, ITP 2011) who's research publication *The social and moral issues along with vibrant climate of India transformed significantly the British palette of Turner, Blake and Stubbs during the 18th and 19th centuries*, has enabled her to share her findings on British art with readers all over the world and raise awareness about another dimension of British art on Indian themes.

Osaru Obaseki (Nigeria, ITP 2021) who's sculpture *THE ANTHILL* won the Black Muse Patron's Art Prize 2025, at the inaugural Black Muse Art Festival in November 2025. The festival's theme was *Let the Forest Dance* saw a 5-day celebration of African art, literature, culture, and community.

Nelson Abiti Adebo (Uganda, ITP 2013) who co-authored the chapter *Handling collections in the museum against cultural ethics* with Mary Mbewe, was published in the UCL Press book *Collections Management as Critical Museum Practice* in 2024.

Andrea Terron Gomez (Guatemala, ITP 2017) who's article *MONOVA – Museum and Archives of Northern Vancouver* was published in the Museum of Cities Review – CAMOC/ICOM Spring 2025 (#6).

Heba Hassan Ahmed Amer (Egypt, ITP 2024) who's efforts contributed to the Alexandria National Museum receiving the First Place Award for Museum Education (UNESCO Cairo & ICOM Egypt, 2023) as well as the Sustainability Implementation Award (2025) in recognition of programmes that integrated traditional crafts with concepts of sustainability and women's empowerment. Heba also participated in the International Conference *Museums and Tourism Development* held at Oman Across Ages Museum in May 2025, where she presented a paper titled *Transforming Historical Figures into Interactive Digital Characters* and conducted a professional workshop, *Reviving History Digitally* focusing on integrating digital heritage and museum education within sustainable tourism practices.

Gao Rui (China, ITP 2023) who in 2025, as project manager, co-organised the exhibition *Journey of a Century: From the Forbidden City to the Palace Museum* in partnership with Durham University – marking the centenary of the Palace Museum. It successfully opened on 25 September 2025, at Durham University's Oriental Museum, becoming the first overseas exhibition dedicated to the Palace Museum's institutional history.

Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji (Iraq, ITP 2024) who was made employee of the year at Iraq Museum.



ITP 2013 at Stonehenge.

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