INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

ITP+ Global Engagement and Cultural Diplomacy and ICOM UK Conference 2026



London and Oxford

Saturday 11 to Sunday 19 April 2026

The British Museum

The British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP) seeks to develop a sustainable global network of inspired museum and heritage professionals, through sharing knowledge, skills and experiences. The ITP alumni now totals 393 fellows from 65 countries, and the Museum aims to develop and deliver a wide range of projects and programmes to ensure the Programme thrives in the years ahead.

Philanthropic support for the ITP has enabled the British Museum (BM) to plan with added confidence and provide for the programme's growing network of culture and heritage professionals. In April 2026, with the generous support from our new major funder, the Museum was able to support, for the first time since 2019, an ITP+ programme held in London, and travel to Oxford for the ICOM UK Conference.

'Returning to the ITP community after participating in the annual programme in 2016 was inspiring and deeply emotional. Over the years, the International Training Programme has remained an important part of my professional development, consistently opening new friendships and perspectives. The ITP+ programme felt like a meaningful continuation of that journey.'
Barbara Vujanović (Croatia, ITP 2016)

This report provides an overview of the scope and delivery of the week-long programme, held in both London and Oxford, between 11– 19 April 2026. The programme was attended by:

Alsu Akhmetzyanova, Independent Curator and Art Manager (Uzbekistan, ITP 2019)

Barbara Vujanović, Chief Curator, Meštrović Atelier (Croatia, ITP 2016)

Gao Rui, Researcher, The Palace Museum (China, ITP 2023)

Levent Boz, Specialist, Directorate General of Cultural Assets and Museums, Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Türkiye, ITP 2011)

Mattie Reynolds, Department Chair and Associate Professor of Museum Studies, Institute of American Indian Arts (USA, ITP 2024)

Olena Shevchenko, Senior Researcher and Head of the Archaeological Collections Management & Research Department, Odesa Archaeological Museum (Ukraine, ITP 2025)

Roshan Mishra, Director and Curator, Taragaon Next (Nepal, ITP 2018)

Tapunga Nepe, Director, Tairāwhiti Museum (New Zealand, ITP 2017)

'The title, 'Global Engagement and Cultural Diplomacy', immediately touched something very familiar for me. As I mentioned in my application, global engagement and cultural diplomacy are not abstract concepts in my daily work. In fact, they are very close to what I do every day in the office…So, when I saw this ITP+ course, I felt that it was not only another professional development opportunity. It was also a chance to return to a familiar place, reconnect with the ITP spirit, and reflect on what I have been doing in my current role.'
Levent Boz (Türkiye, ITP 2011)

Please see Appendix for the biographies of this programme's participants.

ITP+ programme

ITP+ programmes are short, thematic workshops that respond to our alumni's stated areas of interest, development needs, and challenges within their home institutions. Themes are chosen to reflect emerging priorities, skills gaps, and contemporary issues across the museum and cultural heritage sector, providing relevant learning opportunities for fellows in a range of roles. The theme of this year's ITP+, *Global Engagement and Cultural Diplomacy*, was chosen in response to feedback from fellows on the important role that museums can play as agents of soft power. By bringing together a range of colleagues working within this field in varying ways, the programme explored how museums can act as agents of cultural connection, collaboration and dialogue in a rapidly changing world.

Day one started with introductions, providing an opportunity for each fellow to share their professional backgrounds, current work, and motivations for participating in this legacy project. As this was the first time this group had met in person, creating space for participants to get to know one another and identify shared interests and experiences was an important first step. This helped establish a foundation of trust and mutual understanding, enabling open, honest, and respectful discussion throughout the week.

The wealth of the ITP program is found in its network and ability to create global connections between professionals, something echoed in the theme of the ICOM UK conference. I have to say, the group chats that have emerged from these opportunities are in constant motion: we ask questions, bounce ideas back and forth, and celebrate successes. The ITP+ offered yet another opportunity to make friends and compare notes.'
Mattie Reynolds (USA, 2024)

The afternoon was led by colleagues from the British Museum's Endangered Materials Knowledge programme: Dr Paula Granados, Head, EMKP and Dr Elia Quijano, Project Curator, EMKP. The session introduced the EMKP programme and discussed strategies to ethically record endangered knowledge while still protecting local knowledge structures. The group were introduced to the FAIR and CARE principles for indigenous data governance which redresses the power imbalance between communities, data collectors and digital service providers. The session gave an insight into the realities and challenges of indigenous-led practice and the practicalities of shared authority, whilst demonstrating how meaningful partnerships can create more equitable and sustainable approaches to knowledge preservation.



ITP fellows with EMKP colleagues Dr Paula Granados and Dr Elia Quijano

"As someone who is deeply passionate about documentation, this was the perfect session for me. It made me reflect on the 142 different ethnic communities in Nepal, almost all of which remain undocumented, with many traditions currently endangered. The session served as a powerful reminder that Nepal's rich Indigenous knowledge traditions are disappearing faster than they are being documented, making their preservation an urgent national priority."
Roshan Mishra (Nepal, ITP 2018)

Day two began with a warm welcome from the Museum Director, Nicholas Cullinan, and an informal meeting over tea and coffee. The fellows were keen to hear Nick's vision for the future of the museum and discussed a range of topics including repatriation, challenges surrounding the existing collection, decolonial approaches to museum practice, and the role of contemporary art as a form of intervention. The conversation offered valuable insight into how the Museum is navigating complex questions of heritage, representation and institutional transformation.



ITP fellows with British Museum Director, Nicholas Cullinan

The second session of the ITP+ programme explored how institutions can use cultural diplomacy to build global relationships, and began with a presentation from Dr Eva Islimye, Senior International Partnerships & Engagement Manager – International Placement Scheme, Asia, Africa and Latin America at the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC). AHRC funds research, innovation and talent across the arts and humanities research sector and is committed to addressing inequality, diversity and inclusion across international projects. Eva shared the process of building and sustaining ethical international partnerships from an institutional perspective, and the variety of programmes they fund and support across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Eva also spoke openly about the barriers to international collaboration and the ways that AHRC works to mitigate these within their funding structure. Her insights demonstrated how institutions can embed equity, mutual benefit and long-term relationship building into their international engagement strategies, providing the fellows with practical considerations for developing their own global partnerships.

The morning continued with a session led by Mattie Reynolds and colleagues Alanna Austin and Arista Slater-Sandoval from the Institute of American Indian Arts, who shared insights from an extended version of their forthcoming ICOM UK paper, *Common Ground: An International Indigenous Cultural Exchange*. The presentation reflected on their 4 yearlong indigenous artist exchange project, which highlighted their approach to funding, relationship building, and suggested best practices for working with Indigenous communities. Alanna and Arista, both educators and practising artists, led the fellows through a hands-on activity inspired by the artist exchange programme. The fellows learned how to carve and print a meaningful word of their choosing onto handmade paper produced in the IAIA studios, offering a tangible connection to the project's themes and creative methods.

'It was an intimate, but unparalleled, opportunity to share several pieces of learning with the other ITP+ fellows. First, the importance of elevating the Indigenous voice and the effectiveness of using art to do so. And second, the benefit that engaging in relationship building in an Indigenous way (based in respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility) has for anyone, not just institutions working with Indigenous communities.'
Mattie Renolds (USA, ITP 2024)



Mattie and ITP fellows participating in the printing activity

In the afternoon Roshan Mishra explored the role of museums in times of crisis through a discussion of his forthcoming ICOM UK paper *Museum Diplomacy: The Evolving Role of Museums in Nepal's Conflict Recovery*, using his work as a case study to explore the sector's contribution to conflict recovery and reconciliation. Roshan shared his first-hand experiences of the impact of theft on cultural institutions in the wake of natural disasters and periods of social and political conflict. Drawing on the work of Taragaon Next, he demonstrated how museums and cultural organisations can play a vital role in post-crisis recovery through public programming, community engagement and cultural stewardship. His presentation highlighted the power of cultural diplomacy to strengthen social cohesion, preserve cultural heritage and support communities as they rebuild following periods of upheaval.

'The session on museums in times of crisis was particularly relevant and powerful in such unstable political situations around the world. It really changed my perspective and expanded my understanding on how museum can create spaces of resilience, dialogue and even healing in the war times, displacement, conflicts and climate change. It shifts the perspective of the role of cultural institutions.'
Alsu Akhmetzyanova (Uzbekistan, ITP 2019)

The afternoon finished with Maria Blyzinsky, Cultural Heritage Consultant, The Exhibitions Team and Co-Chair ICOM UK (Blue Shield UK liaison). Maria was the lead writer for *Supporting Decolonisation in Museums: Focus on Ukraine*, a co-created guide between the Ukrainian Institute, ICOM UK, ICOM Ukraine, the Museums Association and the British Council. The purpose of the guide is to explain why and how Ukraine should be included in decolonisation practice, offering new perspectives on its the rich cultural heritage whilst challenging harmful colonial narratives to convey more accurate and nuanced interpretations. Maria spoke about the collaborative process behind the project and the importance of framing local experiences in ways that resonate with global audiences. Her presentation reinforced the importance of partnership-led approaches in creating space for new perspectives and demonstrated how, by working across borders, museums can engage with complex historical narratives and spark opportunities for meaningful exchange and learning.

'For me this was very interesting because I know many of these issues from practical experience. I was very happy to see that Ukraine now has an important place in the European museum and academic community, and that the image of my country is changing. I shared some of my own ideas during the discussion, and Maria helped me find new contacts for possible future collaboration.'
Olena Shevchenko (Ukraine, ITP 2025)

The third and final day of the ITP+ programme concluded with a workshop focused on developing a toolkit for developing ethical international partnerships. Drawing on their professional skills, experience and learning from the programme, fellows worked together to create a resource that brings together insights and practical guidance from across the ITP network on how to start, strengthen, and sustain ethical international partnerships. The workshop encouraged participants to reflect on the practical realities of establishing equitable, respectful, and mutually beneficial partnerships across institutions and countries. At a time when international cultural collaborations are increasingly examined through the lenses of decolonisation, power dynamics, and shared accountability, such guidance is more important than ever. The aim of the session was to begin to develop a clear and actionable resource for the ITP website, supporting fellows and organisations in creating sustainable and ethically grounded international partnerships in the future. The toolkit is an ongoing collaboration with ITP fellows, and is due to be launched in August 2026.

The ICOM UK Conference 2026
ICOM UK is the national branch of ICOM in the United Kingdom. It is a gateway to the global museum community and the only UK museum association with a dedicated international focus. It offers access to 20,000 museums in 172 countries, 32,000 museum colleagues throughout the world and 31 professional committees. Promoting intangible heritage and the preservation of material heritage, it develops best practice standards for the world-wide museum industry and, through its global reach and events programme, contributes to the international agenda of museums in the UK.

Each year ICOM UK delivers a conference which reflects contemporary issues in the culture and heritage sector and are uniquely positioned to bring a global element to these discussions. By attending the ICOM UK Conference, fellows heard from colleagues globally about current practices and projects, engaged in debates around the future of museums and their audiences and created networks outside the ITP.

'This was my first time attending a museum association conference outside China, and over the course of two days I reunited with many colleagues I had met throughout my career, including professionals from the Science Museum Group, Imperial War Museums, the V&A, and the British Library, etc. Some of us had communicated for years only by email, making these in-person encounters especially meaningful.'
Gao Rui (China, ITP 2023)

Museum Diplomacy in Action
The 2026 ICOM UK Conference was co-curated with the President of ICOM Canada Dr Sascha Priewe, co-editor of *Museum Diplomacy: How Cultural Institutions Shape Global Engagement*. The conference, *Museum Diplomacy in Action*, explored the unique role of museums as cultural diplomats in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Museum professionals from across the world shared internationally focused projects and practical examples of diplomacy in action, demonstrating how museums can build connections across cultures, address shared global challenges, foster collaboration, and strengthen international relationships.

Keynote speakers included Dr Sascha Priewe who opened the conference with *Liberation Day for Museum Diplomacy?* examining how museum diplomacy must adapt to an increasingly complex and rapidly changing global landscape, advocating for a model that is aware, locally rooted and agile enough to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities for collaboration. Later we heard from Dr Laura Van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, who presented *Do we need Museum Diplomacy or Museum Solidarity?* arguing that diplomacy requires mutuality, transparency and accountability, yet the UK's limited commitment to redress and repatriation risks rendering claims of partnership and reciprocity hollow. And the day concluded with Sir Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, who presented *Museums and Soft Power in an Era of Hard Realities*, exploring how museums like the V&A can champion internationalism, counter chauvinism and shape a more equitable cultural economy through scholarship, collaboration and the exchange of global collections.

Speakers at the conference were evidence of the long-term success of the ITP, with both Mattie Reynolds and Roshan Mishra invited to present in person, and Shreen Amin, Head of the Scientific Office and the Children's Museum, Egyptian Museum Cairo (Egypt, 2016) invited to present her paper *AI and Virtual Heritage: Reimagining Museum Diplomacy at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir* virtually.





Mattie Reynolds and Roshan Mishra presenting at the ICOM UK conference

Networking
Networking has been highlighted by participants as an invaluable element of professional development within the ITP. The programme therefore included evening events, providing an informal and relaxed setting for fellows, the ITP team and conference participants to engage.

Also attending the conference were Astghik Marabyan, Head of Department of Culture Heritage, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (Armenia, ITP 2017) and Ronan Brindley, formerly Lead for Learning & Engagement, Manchester Art Gallery who joined the group for networking drinks and an informal dinner at the end of the programme.





ITP fellows with Astghik Marabyan and Ronan Brindley

'The evening ended with our shared celebration dinner with all ITP+ participants. For me this was not only a social event but also a real opportunity to develop museum diplomacy and human connections between countries. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, with good food, we spoke about many different topics – professional, cultural, and personal. It was during these informal moments that trust and future cooperation are often built most naturally.'
Olena Shevchenko (Ukraine, ITP 2025)

Outcomes
Clear and immediate results are demonstrated in the fellows' reports, which they each wrote on their time spend on this legacy project. A summary of these are as follows:

- Greater awareness of the current challenges and opportunities faced by the global museum sector, and case studies on how to navigate cultural, political and international contexts.
- Improved understanding of ethical approaches to international partnerships and collaborations.
- Commitment to sharing learning and embedding programme outcomes within home institutions.

- Increased confidence in advocating for and applying new approaches to ethical and sustainable partnerships within home institutions.
- Stronger connections with fellows across the ITP network, creating opportunities for ongoing support and knowledge sharing.
- Expanded international professional networks across museums and cultural institutions, including ICOM UK.

'Most importantly, the programme strengthened my belief that museums can still function as spaces of empathy, encounter and meaningful dialogue. Cultural diplomacy is not an abstract political concept. It is something deeply practical and human. It exists in the (hi)stories we choose to tell, the languages and terms we use, the communities we welcome and include and the personal relationships we build with one another.'
Barbara Vujanović (Croatia, ITP 2016)

The fellows' reports highlighted the value of a programme centred around knowledge exchange and networking as an effective means of generating new ideas and approaches that fellows can apply within their own institutions. The small cohort size created a supportive environment for open and judgement-free discussion, enabling fellows to explore shared challenges, exchange experiences, and potential areas for future collaboration.

The programme provided valuable opportunities to connect with colleagues at the British Museum, partner organisations and the wider international museum sector through both the ITP+ and ICOM UK conference. Most importantly, it strengthened connections between the fellows themselves, fostering relationships that will support ongoing collaboration, exchange and learning across the ITP global network.

Acknowledgements

Supported by
The British Museum remains grateful to the range of trusts, foundations and individuals who support the annual International Training Programme each year.

Special thanks to the following institutions and individuals for their invaluable contributions to the programme:

Dr Paula Granados, Head, EMKP and **Dr Elia Quijano**, Project Curator, EMKP
Dr Eva Islimye, Senior International Partnerships & Engagement Manager – International Placement Scheme, Asia, Africa and Latin America, Arts & Humanities Research Council
Alanna Austin, **Arista Slater-Sandoval** and **Mattie Reynolds**, Institute of American Indian Arts
Roshan Mishra Director and Curator, Taragaon Next
Maria Blyzinsky, Cultural Heritage Consultant, The Exhibitions Team and Co-Chair ICOM UK (Blue Shield UK liaison)
Ronan Brindley, formerly Lead for Learning & Engagement, Manchester Art Gallery
ICOM UK

Appendix
Fellows' biographies

Alsu Akhmetzyanova

Independent Curator and Art Manager
Uzbekistan
ITP 2019



Alsu Akhmetzyanova is an independent curator and art manager from Uzbekistan working across contemporary art, crafts and cultural heritage. Her most recent work includes serving as Assistant Curator for the first Uzbekistan Pavilion at the London Design Biennale 2025, where she developed curatorial storytelling, research, and international coordination under the theme *The Once and Future Garden*.

Alsu currently works as Art Manager in the Regeneration Art Gallery (Tashkent, Uzbekistan), where she develops international strategy, builds institutional partnerships, and represents artists on global platforms. Her work focuses on expanding exhibition opportunities, residency placements, and market access for Central Asian artists, strengthening their visibility within international contemporary art networks.

Previously, Alsu worked at the Arts and Culture Development Foundation under the Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan, where she was Project Manager of the country's first National Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, and later headed the Education Department. At the Foundation, Alsu oversaw major cultural initiatives, including the establishment of Uzbekistan's first Centre for Contemporary Art, and professional development programmes in partnership with Goldsmith's University and the Smithsonian Institute.

As an independent curator, Alsu continues to collaborate with artists and institutions on research-based and cross-disciplinary projects. Beyond her curatorial practice, Alsu is known for her art blog on Instagram *@alsuinwonderland* where she documents exhibitions and artistic life across Central Asia, promoting accessible conversations about art and culture for a wider audience.

At the British Museum
During her time on the International Training Programme in 2019, Alsu was based in the Middle East Department. Her UK Partner Placement was spent at Glasgow Museums.

Continued Engagement
In 2020 Alsu conducted an Online Subject Specialist Session for the International Training Programme. Alsu led a session titled The Samarkand Half Marathon, Cultural Accessibility and 'Going Digital' during COVID-19

Alsu also attended these online sessions in 2020:
Collecting COVID-19
Egyptology in Lockdown: Connecting collections with isolated people
Setting up a Subject Specialist Network

In November 2022 Alsu participated in the ITP MA Conference programme in Edinburgh. With fellows from Armenia, Egypt, Romania and Rwanda, Alsu attended a programme structured around the 3-day MA Conference *Make Change Happen*.

Barbara Vujanović

Chief Curator
Meštrović Atelier (The Ivan Meštrović Museums)
Croatia
ITP 2016



Barbara Vujanović is a Chief Curator at the Meštrović Atelier (The Ivan Meštrović Museums) in Zagreb. Her research background is in art history and French language and literature, and she wrote her doctoral dissertation on '*From antique models to neoclassicism: a classical component in the work of Ivan Meštrović*'.

She has recently been heavily involved in creating the concept for the new permanent display at the Meštrović Atelier. The museum reopened on December 13th, 2025. Her work included selecting artworks, designing the thematic sections, and coordinating all activities related to the project. Additionally, she has prepared interpretive texts that are grounded in contemporary museological approaches and methodologies.

Since participating in the ITP, Barbara has presented the exhibitions, *Ivan Meštrović: Adriatic Epopee in Krakow* (2017); *Corporeality and Eroticism in Sculpture* in Ljubljana (2018); *Ivan Meštrović* (1883–1962); *Sculptor and Citizen of the World* in Prague (2022–2023); *Ivan Meštrović – the Retrospective in Zagreb* (2023–2024); and *Ivan Meštrović and Tomislav Gotovac. INTIMACY OF THE PUBLIC* in Zagreb (2025).

She also authored the exhibitions *Ivan Meštrović – Portraits of Contemporaries – Universes of personal encounters and social involvements* (2021–2022), *The Sign of Meštrović in Zagreb – Architecture: The 80 Years of the Meštrović Pavilion* (Zagreb, 2018–2019). She is the author of the book *The Mark of Meštrović in Zagreb* (2017) and co-author of the book *Ivan Meštrović and the Czechs: Examples of the Croatian-Czech Cultural and Political Reciprocity* (2018).

Barbara regularly publishes reviews and articles, writes prefaces for catalogues and devises the curatorial conceptions for independent and group exhibitions of 19th, 20th century and contemporary art. She has also presented research on the life and work of Ivan Meštrović at conferences in Croatia as well as abroad in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Norway, China, Czech Republic, Latvia, South African Republic and Malta.

In 2017, Barbara presented alongside fellow 2016 ITP participant Ana Šverko on the experience and knowledge gained during their time at the British Museum in a lecture organised by Prokultura: Observatory of Cultural Politics, Ivan Mestrovic Museums and Art History Institute, and the Centre Cvito Fisković.

At the British Museum
During her time on the International Training Programme in 2016, Barbara was based in the Department of Greece and Rome. Her UK Partner Placement was spent at Manchester Museum and Manchester Art Gallery.

Continued Engagement
Barbara was invited back to the British Museum in 2017 to help deliver a Spotlight Loan Project. To coincide with the British Museum's blockbuster exhibition Rodin and the art of ancient

Greece, Barbara worked on Rodin: rethinking the fragment, which toured to three UK venues – Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal; Holburne Museum, Bath and The New Art Gallery, Walsall – from summer 2018 – 2019.

Barbara has returned to the British Museum many times and visited BM UK partner venues to participate in meetings, conduct research and deliver curator's talks.

In 2023 the British Museum hosted an event in celebration of the International Training Programme and the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust's vital support of the programme over the years. Barbara delivered a speech at the event to share her experiences of the ITP and the work she has gone on to do since completing the programme.

ITP Newsletter Publications
ITP Newsletter Issue 5 (2018), Bulletin Board

Gao Rui

Researcher
The Palace Museum
China
ITP 2023



Gao Rui has been working for the Department of International Exchanges at the Palace Museum since 2016. Gao Rui is driven by a deep passion of classic art, and the history of the Forbidden City – upon which the Palace Museum was established, alongside his interest in the study of mutual exchange and learning between Chinese and foreign civilisations. These passions were all big motivators in starting his career at the Palace Museum. His main duties include managing international projects, and communications with international museums for devising exhibitions and loans.

Since joining the Palace Museum in 2016, Gao Rui has managed a series of international loans and collaborative exhibitions with institutions from Finland, Monaco, Russia, Singapore, the UK, etc.
With his deepening engagement in the Palace Museum's international cooperation projects, Gao Rui has – over the past several years – devoted particular focus and substantial effort to coordinating the Museum's exchanges with British cultural institutions. A major part of his work has centred on reciprocal loan exhibitions between the Palace Museum and museums in the United Kingdom.

One of the most remarkable projects was the 2024 collaborative exhibition with the Science Museum, for which the Palace Museum loaned 23 timepieces from its renowned clock collection. Held from February to June 2024, the exhibition explored the artistry, aesthetics, and imagination embodied in 18th-century clocks – those produced in Britain and brought across the seas to the Chinese court, as well as those locally made in China. The show received high praise from British audiences, and its success laid a solid foundation for future collaborations between the Palace Museum and the Science Museum, expanding into broader fields and more inspiring themes.

In 2023, Gao Rui served as a curatorial team member for the exhibition *Tea World*, during which he coordinated the loan of over twenty tea-related artefacts from the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum.

In 2025, marking the centenary of the Palace Museum, Gao Rui, as project manager, co-organised the exhibition *Journey of a Century: From the Forbidden City to the Palace Museum*, in partnership with Durham University. Through a series of historical photographs, the exhibition narrated the transformation of the Forbidden City from an imperial palace to a museum open to the public and is emblematic of modern China. It opened successfully on September 25th, 2025, at Durham University's Oriental Museum, becoming the first overseas exhibition dedicated to the Palace Museum's institutional history at this milestone moment.

Beyond exhibitions loans, Gao Rui continues to foster and expand partnerships between the Palace Museum and museums in Britain. He led the *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* between the Palace Museum and the British Museum, which was signed on October 10, 2025 – the very day marking the Palace Museum's 100th anniversary. The event not only held symbolic

significance for the two institutions but also represented a memorable milestone in Gao Rui's professional journey. Taking this moment as a new beginning, he remains committed to deepening exchanges between the Palace Museum and British cultural institutions, spearheading even more meaningful and inspiring collaborations in the years ahead.

Gao Rui holds an academic background in English literature. Beyond his responsibilities in organising and coordinating various international projects, he remains deeply interested in exploring British classical literature and artistic movements – particularly the social transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution since the 18th century, and their reflections in literature and art. During this period, exchanges between China and Britain also became increasingly frequent. Tangible evidence and archival materials of these interactions are now preserved in numerous museums in both countries – especially in the UK. This subject continues to fascinate expertise and scholarly background; he hopes to collaborate with experts from British cultural institutions to explore these shares histories more deeply.

Professionally, Gao Rui is interested in organising international exhibitions and loans as it gives him the opportunity to experience new cultures and be in new environments. He enjoys being close to artworks and objects from other countries and likes to exchange ideas about the management and running of exhibitions with colleagues from across the globe.

At the British Museum
During his time on the International Training Programme in 2023, Gao Rui was based in the Department of Asia. His UK Partner Placement was spent at North East Museums.

Levent Boz



Specialist
Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate General of Cultural Assets and Museums
Türkiye
ITP 2011

Levent works as a Specialist in the unit responsible for organising national and international exhibitions for the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. His responsibilities include coordinating temporary exhibitions that international museums wish to organise; by borrowing artefacts from Turkish museums, providing support in the selection of objects and the development of exhibition concepts, and overseeing intergovernmental bureaucratic and diplomatic procedures to ensure the smooth resolution of any issues that may arise. In addition to these duties, he carries out curatorial research for the creation of new exhibitions within Türkiye.

Levent joined the ITP in 2011 as an Archaeologist for the Turkish General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums, while working on his Master's on *Ottoman Turkish Rugs in Transylvanian Protestant churches*. In 2015, Levent completed his Master's degree in Art History and received an honorary award from the Romanian Ambassador for his contributions to the cultural relations between Türkiye and Romania. In 2023, he was awarded his PhD with a dissertation titled *Ottoman and Safavid Carpets in 16th and 17th Centuries Europe: Interaction and Competition*.

Additionally, Levent is involved in digital cultural heritage projects which focus on preserving and documenting cultural assets, drawing on his strong IT background. He was part of the team that implemented the *Museum National Inventory System (MUES)* and the *Immovable Cultural Assets National Inventory System (TUES)*.

Levent has produced multiple publications, including:
(2013) *Suggestion of RFID technology for tracking museum objects in Türkiye*, co-authored by Levent Boz, Nurdan Atalan Cayirezmez, and Hakan Melih Aygün, 2013 Digital Heritage International Congress (Digital Heritage).

(2014) *Romanya'nın Transilvanya Bölgesi Protestan Kiliselerine Halı Bağışlama Geleneği*, Levent Boz, Vakıflar Dergisi, December 2014.

(2015) *A Short Story of a Master's Thesis in Art History (Die Entstehungsgeschichte einer Masterarbeit im Fach Kunstgeschichte),* Levent Boz, Carpet Collector Magazine Issue 4, 2015.

(2016) *The Departure of the Prodigal Child from Venice by James Tissot (Die Abfahrt des verlorenen Kindes von Venedig von James Tissot),* Levent Boz, Carpet Collector Magazine Issue 1, 2016.

(2017) *Anatolian Carpets in the Historical Photos of Transylvanian Protestant Churches*, Levent Boz, Bruckenthal. Acta Musei 12(2): 419-429, 2017.

(Conference Paper 2017) *SETTING NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM INVENTORY SYSTEM OF TURKEY (MUES),* Hakan Melih Aygün, Nurdan Atalan Cayirezmez, Levent Boz, ICOM CIDOC Annual Conference 'Documentation – Past, Present, Future…' 2017.

(Conference Paper 2019) *Transylvanian Rugs and the Relation with Architecture*, Levent Boz and Stefano Ionescu, 16th International Congress of Turkish Art, October 2019.

(2020) *White Ground 'Bird' Carpets of Selendi and Their Reflections in European Art and Lifestyle*, Levent Boz, Studia et Documenta Turcologica III–IV, December 2020.

At the British Museum
During his time on the International Training Programme in 2011, Levent was based in the Department of Greece and Rome. His UK Partner Placement was spent at Manchester Museum and Manchester Art Gallery.

Continued Engagement
In November 2015 Levent attended the ITP Mumbai Workshop *Creating Museums of World Stories*. The workshop was held at CSMVS and was attended by many ITP fellows from different years and countries, UK partners and British Museum Colleagues.

In 2016 Levent attended the Leicester University Museum Studies Conference with the ITP team and fellows from China, Egypt and Uganda. The group gave a workshop at the conference on *Shared Histories and Global Voices*.

ITP Newsletter Publications
ITP Newsletter Issue 1 (2013), Bulletin Board
ITP Newsletter Issue 2 (2015), Bulletin Board
ITP Newsletter Issue 2 (2015), *Collections in focus: Hüseyindede relief vase from Çorum Museum, Turkey, 16th century BC*
ITP Newsletter Issue 10 (2023) Bulletin Board

Mattie Reynolds



Department Chair and Associate Professor, Museum Studies
Institute of American Indian Arts
USA
ITP 2024

Mattie is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, a Native American tribe from the Southeastern USA. Mattie is the Department Chair and an Associate Professor for the museum studies programme at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), a Native American arts college that serves Indigenous students from around the world.

Mattie is responsible for managing the needs of the department; developing lectures and classroom activities; and seeking partnerships with organisations both nationally and internationally, to support the growth of the students and faculty. Her teaching focusses on curation with an emphasis on community engagement, research and repatriation, all of which centre Indigenous history, culture, and ways of knowing into Western museum theory and practice.

Mattie's research interests focus on the international comparison of museum best practices related to exhibition development and collections management for institutions with Indigenous collections and how practices have changed over time due, in part, to community collaboration.
She is additionally interested in how that comparison can be translated into higher education curriculum.

During her time on the ITP, Mattie looked forward to broadening her approaches to teaching museum studies, and understanding the British Museum's approaches to education, training, and outreach. She also looked forward to connecting with the other ITP participants and learning about their experiences and approaches to museum practice, as well creating a space for sharing Indigenous perspectives.

Recently, Mattie helped to develop an international partnership between Outer Space Gallery, located Magandjin/Brisbane, Australia, and IAIA. Supported by a Creative Australia grant, the partnership will result in an Indigenous artist exchange and two collaborative exhibits, one in the US and one in Australia.

At the British Museum
During her time on the International Training Programme in 2024, Mattie was based in the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. Her UK Partner Placement was spent at Manchester Museum, Manchester Art Gallery and Whitworth Art Gallery.

Olena Shevchenko

Senior Researcher and Head of the Archaeological Collections Management & Research Department
Odesa Archaeological Museum
Ukraine
ITP 2025



Olena is the Head of the Archaeological Collections Management & Research Department at Odesa Archaeological Museum, where she oversees the curation, preservation, and study of artifacts in the museum's collection.

Currently, Olena is on secondment in London, working on a research project at King's College London's Department of Classics. Her primary task is creating a trilingual version of the Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea Region (INBS) database, which involves translating inscriptions and developing a database of technical terms using Oxygen XML in Ukrainian. As well as this, Olena is currently researching Sarmatian funerary practices, building on her PhD studies.

Despite being abroad, Olena maintains an active role in supporting the Odesa Archaeological Museum. This includes consulting on new exhibitions, assisting with grant applications, advising on artifact preservation, and supporting colleagues working with catalogues. A significant part of her role involves mentoring junior colleagues in all aspects of museum work, from research methodologies to collection management. This dual position allows Olena to bridge academic research with practical museum operations and gives her the opportunity to foster international collaboration and knowledge exchange in the field of archaeology and museum studies.

At the British Museum
During her time on the International Training Programme in 2025, Olena was based in the Department of Greece and Rome. Her UK Partner Placement was spent at Lincoln Museum and University of Nottingham Museum.

Continued Engagement
In October 2025 Olena participated in the ITP MA Conference programme in Cardiff. With fellows from Egypt, Ghana, Iraq and Lebanon, Olena attended a programme structured around the 3-day MA Conference on *Perthyn – Belonging*.

Roshan Mishra

Director and Curator
Taragaon Next
Nepal
ITP 2018



Roshan is the Director of Taragaon Next and a visual artist based in Kathmandu. He began working at the Taragaon Museum in 2013 and played an instrumental role in transforming it into Taragaon Next in 2022.

Roshan heads the Nepal Architecture Archive (NAA), which is run by the Saraf Foundation for Himalayan Traditions and Culture, a patron organization of the Taragaon Next. For the past 11 years, he has been affiliated with the institution, working with its permanent collection, launching the Contemporary Art Gallery, and creating an archive and library.

In 2014, Roshan officially opened a contemporary art gallery at Taragaon and began curating works of Nepali contemporary art. Since then, he has curated numerous exhibitions. In 2024, he co-curated an exhibition titled *Reimagine:* Himalayan Art Now at the Rubin Museum, working with 32 artists from the Himalayan region.

In 2018, after returning from the British Museum's ITP, he initiated the Object in Focus exhibition series at Taragaon Next, focusing on contemporary art, he has organized seven series so far. In 2019, he launched the Taragaon Artist in Studio program, providing dedicated working and exhibition spaces at Taragaon Next.

Roshan is also actively involved with Sagarmatha Next, where he supports the resident artists and art projects. He is also the founder of the Global Nepali Museum and Nepalian Art and an initiator of the Mishra Museum. He is a visiting faculty member at Kathmandu University, specializing in research, documentation, and archiving programs.

Roshan studied Fine Arts in Nepal, Japan, and the UK and holds a Master's degree in Digital Art. Roshan is a board member of ICOM Nepal and is a general member of CIMAM, IKT, the British Art Network, and other organizations.

In 2020, along with four other members, he formalized the Nepal Heritage Repatriation Campaign. Since then, he has been actively involved in efforts to bring back Nepal's lost and stolen heritage. The campaign has successfully recovered almost 60 artefacts from museums, private collections, and auction houses within four years and has identified over 200 Nepali artefacts that illegally left the country.

At the British Museum
During his time on the International Training Programme in 2018, Roshan was based in the Department of Asia. His UK Partner Placement was spent at Glasgow Museums.

Continued Engagement
In October 2019 Roshan participated in the ITP MA Conference programme in Brighton. With fellows from Egypt, India, Armenia and China, Roshan attended a programme structured around the 3-day MA Conference on *Sustainable and Ethical Museums in a Globalised World*.

Roshan returned to the British Museum in 2022 in the role of Senior Fellow. He supported the ITP team in the build up to, during and after the Annual Programme, attended by 15 museum professionals from 12 countries. Following on from this Roshan also took on the role of guest editor of the 2023 ITP Newsletter.

Roshan is also a member of the ITP Advisory Board.

ITP Newsletter Publications
ITP Newsletter Issue 6 (2019) Connectivity in the 21st century: making collections accessible; Global Nepali Museum – a database of Nepali objects
ITP Newsletter Issue 10 (2023) Contemporary art in traditional Museum space

Tapunga Nepe

Director
Tairāwhiti Museum
New Zealand
ITP 2017



Ko Puketapu te maunga	*Puketapu is my mountain*
Ko Te Ārai te awa	*Te Ārai is my river*
Ko Horouta me Takitimu ngā waka	*Horouta and Takitimu are my ancestral canoes*
Ko Rongowhakaata te iwi	*Rongowhakaata is my tribe*

"He whare tū ki te wā he kai nā te ahi;
He whare maihi i tū ki te pā-tūwatawata, he tohu nō te rangatira"
(A carved house standing inside a palisaded pā is the mark of a chief;
one standing in the open is food for a fire)

This renowned proverb within Tapunga's tribe in Tūranganui a Kiwa (Gisborne), Aotearoa New Zealand, holds multiple interpretations that are relevant in the context of museums today. Firstly, it signifies the role of museums in stewardship, preserving both the physical and cultural integrity of all artifacts and taonga—embraced by the fortitude of the very communities from which they originate. Secondly, it speaks to the role of leadership, manifested through the collective strengths and concerted efforts of the museum's communities, stakeholders, governance, management, and staff. Thirdly, it reflects the idea of continuity, where the present is anchored in the past, providing a scope for the journey ahead, as a source of enculturation, adaptation, and innovation.

Tapunga's admiration and passion for his indigenous heritage drives him to develop and enhance his understanding of all things Maori, in particular Te Reo Māori (the Māori language), Tikanga Māori (Māori customs) and Taonga Māori (Māori treasures). Deeply rooted in the values nurtured by his elders—the foundation of his intellectual growth and understanding. Tapunga firmly believes that a memory that does not aspire to remain relevant risks fading away, and that knowledge must remain in a state of flux to effect transformative change across all aspects of life.

With a background in education, he firmly believes that education is an essential tool in developing the capacity and capabilities of indigenous people, with the hope that one day, Māori or any other indigenous people can manage and care for their traditional taonga and truly fulfil the role of kaitiekitanga (guardianship), as an expression of identity and rangatiratanga (self-determination).

Tapunga is currently the Director of Tairāwhiti Museum. Prior to this role, he completed a Master's in Museum Studies. His thesis, *He whare maihi i tū ki te pā-tūwatawata: Kaitiekitanga, an eternal thread of rangatiratanga — a Rongowhakaata perspective*, explores kaitiekitanga in relation to taonga Māori held in museums as a means of maintaining identity and strengthening whānau, hapū, and iwi self-determination.

A significant component of Tapunga's research was supported by the *He Whai Mātauranga Scholarship*, established by the British High Commission to enable Māori scholars to study

taonga held in UK institutions. This experience, including visits to the British Museum, the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the Royal Cornwall Museum, demonstrated the power of cross-cultural exchange in building understanding and trust.

At the British Museum
During his time on the International Training Programme in 2017, Tapunga was based in the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. His UK Partner Placement was spent at Manchester Museum and Manchester Art Gallery.

Continued Engagement
Since ITP 2017, Tapunga has continued his international engagement. He is part of the British Museum Masterplan International Working Group (IWG) which has invited international museum and cultural heritage experts to collaborate with the Museum and support the development of new suites of permanent galleries at the Museum through online meetings and workshops in London. The IWG has provided a valuable forum for diverse perspectives to inform and contribute to future developments.