

## London Museum Development

# Diversity Matters Programme

### 2018-2022

London Museum Development's Diversity Matters Programme encourages London's non-national museums to embrace Arts Council England's [Creative Case for Diversity](#) and engage a more diverse range of visitors with the collections they hold, as well as support them with long standing issues about the diversity of their boards and workforce. Over the four years London's non-national museums will be encouraged to make diversity a key issue in relation to the programming, audience development, leadership and workforce of museums. The national agenda focuses on increasing opportunities for people from protected characteristic groups<sup>1</sup> and overcoming the challenges and the barriers to participation and engagement across socio-economic barriers and across geographic location.

As part of the wider programme, London Museum Development asked museums to share their experiences of developing responsive and diverse programmes, exhibitions, collections, audience initiatives, workforce and trustee boards for all its visitors. The following case study is showcased on the website as it addresses one of the four key areas of diversity practice:

- How museums have worked with its diverse visitors to diversify its public programmes, events, exhibitions and collections to ensure it is more responsive to its respective local community
- How museums have reached more diverse audiences and ensured its audience is more representative of its respective local community
- How museums have developed a more diverse board of trustees that is more representative of its respective local community.
- How museums have recruited and retained a diverse workforce which is more representative of its respective local community.

## Bruce Castle Museum Case Study



<b>Project Title:</b>	Weaving Tales of Resilience
<b>Timescales:</b>	October 2020-March 2021
<b>Budget:</b>	£3,000

<sup>1</sup> Diversity is defined by Arts Council England through protected characteristic groups, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Duty 2011. These protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation as well as class and socio-economic status.

<b>Overall area of diversity practice covered as part of project:</b>		<b>Yes</b>
	Working with diverse visitors to produce, present and distribute its public programmes, events, exhibitions and collections to ensure it is more responsive to its respective local community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reaching diverse audiences to ensure its audience is more representative of its respective local community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Arts Council England's <a href="#">Creative Case for Diversity</a> evidence area covered as part of project:</b>		<b>Yes</b>
	Integrating diversity in the museum's programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Engaging a diverse range of people in developing/delivering programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Supporting diverse practitioners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Collections are viewed from diverse perspectives and tell untold stories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Protected characteristic group museum worked with as part of project:</b>		<b>Yes</b>
	Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Contact details for further information:</b>	Deborah Hedgecock, Curator: <a href="mailto:Deborah.Hedgecock@haringey.gov.uk">Deborah.Hedgecock@haringey.gov.uk</a>	



*Photograph of Artist's design process for final piece*

## What were the project's aims?

The aim of the project was to:

- Commission a local textile artist to co-create and co-curate an installation, film and small collection of testimonies in an exhibition at Bruce Castle
- Ensure the commissioned artist was representative of the museum's under-represented audiences (from the local black community and a young person)
- Ask the artist to research and be inspired by the local black heritage from within the museum's collections to inspire their new piece
- Enable the artist to incorporate their own responses and interpretations of this collection and weave these stories into the newly-created textile work
- Engage with the local community to incorporate their voices and tales of resilience in the work – especially young people, and elders – to help inform the artists own visual creation
- Create a 'new fabric site-specific installation' to be accessioned into the collection and share the stories of the community's 'community threads of resilience' exhibition using a QR code embedded within a thread from the textile installation.

## Who did the museum work with?

The museum worked with a local emerging textile designer, Marquel Williams (currently in his second year at Central St Martin's College of Art), who grew up in Tottenham. He is part of [N17's Creative Calling](#). He has previously designed a series of clothing designs called 'RUSH,' which he described as "a meditation on ancient Indigenous past unfolding into un-boundaried black queer futures.

Transgressing the gendered, racialized and classed constraints of traditional British tailoring, RUSH specifically traces how the labour of the Windrush Generation has been integral to shaping the nation today."

Marquel and the museum then worked with 19 representatives from local BAME community to capture their stories about the pandemic and their responses to the Black Lives Matters (BLM) movement. The museum recorded these sessions (conducted on the phone and via online platforms, so they could also be accessioned into the museum's collection). These individuals also shared photographs from BLM protests staged locally from the summer alongside, as well as them working in Foodbanks set up in response to Covid. There were also contributions from individuals who: meet online to share and use crafting to support mental wellbeing; well-known and respected community activists and leaders who also offered their voices to the project; and young people's voices, who were able to share their resilience to exclusion and coping methods during lockdown and home schooling.

## What did the project entail?

The projects start coincided with the start of lockdown 2 and so staff and the artist had to re-design how they worked together and share the museum's collection and research. As such the museum used different engagement methods and collection content to inspire the artist to design their new textile piece. This included:

- Online sessions to share and explore the existing local black presence and heritage collections from Bruce Castle
- Sharing the visual archive of images the museum has
- Sharing the stories covering the past 400 years
- Enabling the artist access to the museum's new online Black History Haringey 365 online resources and timeline.

The creative journey in the making of the new artwork was documented along the way. As the artist is studying fashion, he had other support remotely from fellow students, but his access to his usual resources in college art studios was restricted and so he had to adapt accordingly and be flexible in how he continued with his creative outputs. It was also important to provide him with support from staff at Bruce Castle and also a film-maker lead to ensure that the artist did not feel extra pressure impacting on his own mental health during lockdown restrictions.

The artist used his research and the stories and photographs from the local black community to inspire his new artwork for the museum. Unfortunately, there was not an opportunity to physically bring the artist together with the local community as had been planned, due to the pandemic. However, the artists was able to consult and involve the community remotely, online and through socially-distanced outdoor activities to ensure they were able to contribute and co-produce the filming of the stories, collection of the photographs etc.

The artist was able to connect with key people in the community who were involved in networks and able to suggest and broker engagement with a range of people, representative of the diversity of the area. Either people gave ideas or photographs or wrote down their thoughts – whatever way they felt comfortable or able to contribute; others who felt able to were recorded on film. And all contributions have been used and added to collections, with voices heard on film.

Although an on-site exhibition of the new art piece and stories has not been possible due to lockdown restrictions continuing to be in place, the museum will open with the exhibition (when it is once again safe to do so). The exhibition will now be open for longer and will ensure that access (subject to any further restrictions being implemented) to this new installation will be possible until the end of October 2021.

The museum has also taken the opportunity to synchronise the project-end of the [Haringey Vanguard BAME LGBTQ+ project](#) to highlight this project and the artist (who identifies as BAME LGBTQ+) has been able to promote the project at another Vanguard event to audiences. The film created as part of the project was shown at the event, enabling an additional 200 viewers online to hear about the project, who were not previously aware of the project. The museum and artist hope this will stimulate further interest when for visits when restrictions are lifted.

Despite the challenges and uncertainties of consecutive local and national lockdowns, this project proved to be a great achievement and invaluable in documenting a snapshot of a community in lockdown, looking back at the impact of Covid and the effect of BLM on Haringey's local communities. The museum is excited to use the content produced to entice people back to Bruce Castle again when restrictions are lifted to safely visit again.

As the lifting of lockdown restrictions are some time off yet, the museum intends to show the film again at a number of public online events to entice people back to visit the installation at the Museum and also to give additional value to contributions.

### What did the project achieve?

#### *Outputs included:*

Total number of participants worked with:	21
Total number of sessions with participants:	6

Total number of co-curated events for general visitors:	1*
Total number of general visitors made aware of the event:	200**
Total number of days the co-curated exhibition will be open for:	May-October 2021***
Total number of general visitors who attended the co-curated exhibition:	TBC
Total number of new artworks created and accessioned into the collection:	1
Total number of oral history films permanently accessioned into the collection:	20
Total number of photographs permanently accessioned into the collection	50****

\* 1 delivered so far, more planned when it is safe for the museum to open to visitors again

\*\* So far due to the lockdown restrictions

\*\*\* Provided that it is safe to do so and the museum is able to re-open with other museums

\*\*\*\* So far, the museum expects participants to donate further photographs over the coming months, once lockdown restrictions have eased and they are able to visit the museum.

#### Outcomes included:

- A collection of 19 locally-connected cultural leaders, change makers and individuals from Haringey were happy for their stories and community voices to be recorded on film, and were also willing to donate associated photographs of the local black community have permanently been accessioned into the collection
- The artist was able to connect with key people in the community who were involved in wider networks who were able to suggest and broker engagement with a range of local black people, making the contributions, stories, films and photographs more representative of the diversity of the area and therefore the museum's collection overall
- The project provided an invaluable opportunity to document a snapshot of a community in lockdown, looking back at the impact of Covid and the effect of BLM on Haringey's local communities, which will benefit future visitors of the museum for generations to come.

### What impact did the project have?

#### On the organisation:

- The nature and theme of the project has enabled the museum to make very timely recordings of local BAME communities and young people at such an unprecedented period of time
- The project has also allowed the museum to include a wide a range of voices in the associated community exhibition and has supported the museum in reaching out and engaging with those who have not been involved with the museum before, which will has enabled the museum to be better connected with its local community
- Many of the individuals who were willing to be recorded have been involved on the frontline in the pandemic response and so this has been an exceptional opportunity to engage and capture their stories when they have been so busy
- It is has also demonstrated to staff that being flexible to the methods of capturing these stories during lockdown, has allowed more people to be as involved, and take part as much as they like, with the museum considering each voice and story an honour and privilege to hear and include for both the museum's collection and for its future visitors
- Finally, the museum wholeheartedly believe having a project of this quality, which has involved community from different local backgrounds, will be an attraction when they are able to open again when restrictions lift and are looking forward to its audiences responses to the artwork and stories

- There are other opportunities for further engagement in co-curated projects in the pipeline at Bruce Castle in 2021, and so staff are planning for these contributions from these participants to feature in other exhibitions and activities going forward.

*On the participants:*

- Being able to offer a young local creative this opportunity has supported him in his career pathway and will certainly be a project that has marked this particular year in fashion design and textile-making
- Being involved and contributing in response to BLM and Covid has made participants empowered and focussed about ensuring that their voices are heard
- Their voices are representative of different parts of the community who have come together in whatever way, despite the challenges, and not knowing one another, to be part of this project and in making new collections for Bruce Castle
- This project is set within a wider framework of activity at Bruce Castle which raises the profile and promotes the voices of local BAME communities and so in 2021 this project will be on show alongside Haringey Vanguard BAME LGBTQ+ project's exhibition as well as a new Windrush project and online our new Black History Haringey 365 resource
- The museum also believes these participants are likely to add additional collections (films, photographs etc.) over the coming months as a result of this participation, which also be accessioned into the museum's permanent collection
- With the museum planning further co-curated projects at Bruce Castle in 2021, the participants have expressed they would be happy to record further contributions
- Participants have also expressed an interest in exploring other parts of the collections as this project seems to have made people either more aware or more focussed about using the museum's collections to explore other topics about the area and communities, which the museum plans to capitalise on going forward.

### **What lessons did the museum learn from the project?**

Key lessons staff learnt included:

- The overwhelming success has been the actual undertaking and delivery of this project in the midst of back-to-back lockdowns - and yet still being able to maintain a community focus despite the challenges and distractions and other (understandable) priorities
- The focus of the project's theme however, has really helped as a constant driver and its relevance has really attracted people to contribute, however small
- Staff have learnt to the importance in being flexible to undertake this project, given the circumstances
- Working with a local textile artist, was an important attraction for participants and the unusual nature perhaps of using textiles and 'fashion' to form an installation has resonated with many participants
- The connection that participants had with this textile project has enabled the project to be more accessible to people on different levels - stimulating different responses (e.g. cultural connections and traditions, memories within families, reactions to what is everyday becoming 'art'; community crafting supporting mental health and well-being)
- The project has also stimulated curiosity as well as been inspirational for other textile creative responses and as a result staff are looking into how other projects along the theme of 'Weaving Tales of Resilience' can be explored through the stories of other diverse communities in the museum's area.



### What tips does the museum have for other museums undertaking a similar project?

When thinking about working with BAME communities, the museum has shared the following tips:

1. Explore contacts or renew contact with existing established community networks
2. See if other community projects the museum is already involved with can tie in / piggy-back with new project
3. Use the opportunity to engage with and explore existing BAME or marginalised community collections to show how this new work fits in with the collecting activities of the Museum; this will help the group feel valued and 'part of the whole' and perhaps more likely to contribute more to collections or give information to understand existing collections
4. Listen to and enable voices to be heard, added to and help shape project and your collections
5. Think about what opportunities for the community/ group / individual lie beyond the life of the project to continue to be involved.

### Other photographs



*Photograph of artist designing new artwork.*

 @LondonMusDev



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