

Connections/Disconnections

Museums, cultural heritage and diverse communities

Papers from the Victoria and Albert Museum

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Introduction and Overview

Naseem Khan

In 1991, a survey reported that museums were commonly viewed as 'dingy places with different kinds of bits'. Given the conventional picture of museums as traditional hushed sanctums this was perhaps not so startling. Indeed, museums themselves were all too aware of this view of their activities. In the 1990s, they were well advanced in a laborious and at times painful process of re-assessing their role. What were they for? Were they temples or community centres? Voices of continuity or expressions of the contemporary? For a selective audience or for all?

The exercise was timely. Museums have been steadily increasing in number. In 1995, the UNESCO culture report, 'Our Creative Diversity', estimated that 90% of the world's museums dated from after 1956. These institutions may not meet the report's description – 'A modern well-run museum is rather like an upscale suburban shopping mall', but they have also escaped from the dusty corner imagined by the earlier report.

Few stimuli have been more potent in encouraging change than the demographic shift that has led to multicultural societies and internal cultural diversity. Since the end of the last war, immigration has transformed not only the appearance of many British cities, but the character of life within them. Choices of all sorts have increased; the impact on consumers and the effects on mainstream cultures are well documented. While multiculturalism has succeeded in widening the commercial and cultural agenda, it has also raised uncomfortable questions regarding the nature of control and leadership in both these important arenas.

'Heritage as a discursive activity,' said Professor Stuart Hall, in his keynote address for the Arts Council of England's 1999 conference, *Whose Heritage?*, 'inevitably reflects the governing assumptions of its time and context. It is always inflected by the power and authority of those whose versions of history matter.

These assumptions and co-ordinates of power are inhabited as natural, given, timeless, true and inevitable. But it takes only the passage of time, the shift of circumstances, the reversals of history, to reveal those assumptions as time and context-bound, historically specific, and thus open to contestation, re-negotiation, and revision.'

The varied strands and histories of Britain's diverse population have stimulated that process of revision, with other events simultaneously pressing against traditional notions of history, identity and national culture. Political devolution had cut loose parts of the British Isles, encouraging the active expression of Celtic and Gaelic cultures but also diminishing the power of Englishness. What did it mean to be 'English' rather than 'British'? And what relationship did the four components of the overall national unit have with each other, particularly since three of them had originally been included as a result of conquest?

Internationally, a global economy has led to the spread of American cultural expression, whether in food or films, underpinning the counter-declaration of the Council of Europe that supported distinctive national diversities, a brave statement, but a case of 'how many battalions does the Pope have?' Nevertheless, links between nations are sometimes more complex than anti-globalisation recognises, and have much relevance for museums. The Museum of History in Bonn has records on the impact of package-deal tourism and ordinary Germans' encounters with 'the foreign'. Diasporic links between countries of settlements and countries of origin mean that, in many cases, the concept of 'foreignness' has now been significantly eroded.

Where, in this world of shifting sands, do museums pitch their tents? As Jette Sandahl, director of Gothenberg's new World Cultures Museum, put it: 'In transitions, we multiply the elements of our identities. We hyphenate. We realise that our identities are double, triple. A person can be an African-American, a female Russian Jew, a Muslim Bengali woman from Sweden. Elements overlap, fragments merge; they divide, hybridise, fuse.'

Increasing studies and initiatives have set out to explore this area of transition and its implications for policy and practice. The London Museums Agency's report, 'Holding Up the Mirror' looked at how the capital's museum sector was responding

to diversity and reported that 'there is still an uneven level of awareness of the relevance and significance of diversity, coupled with an uncertainty as to how to take diversity issues forward in service development'.

The Greater London Authority has established The Mayor's Commission into African and Asian Heritage, charged with the task of making recommendations that will result in a more accurate and public reflection of the true gamut of London's history. Agencies from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to the Black Environment Network are seeking to widen the definition and use of heritage environments, both built and natural.

It is amongst these criss-crossing lines of complex debate and endeavours that the Victoria and Albert Museum's 2002 conference Connections/Disconnections located itself. The conference sprang out of the museum's own experience during its HLF-funded programme, Cultural Diversity and the V&A. This had comprised a number of initiatives that each in turn threw up issues demanding focus and attention.

First and foremost came the question of scope. Can a great national museum create meaningful links with communities? Should it? In the arts sector, a distinction has historically been made between the functions of the national, regional and local, with hands-on community work being seen as belonging properly to the grassroots in a spirit of subsidiarity. Officers from the V&A's Cultural Diversity programme and other museums contributed accounts of projects that had sought to establish those very links, their aims and their outcomes.

In a number of other cases, museums have bemoaned their inability to respond to diversity because it is not really reflected in their collections. Connections/Disconnections used the V&A's own 'dilemma' to test out that argument. On the face of it, the V&A did not, in its early days of establishment, collect African artefacts. Indeed, the then-head of the V&A, Alan Borg, gave that as the bar to V&A activity at the Whose Heritage? conference in 1999. However, subsequent investigation has shown ways around it; the V&A's own system of classification resulted in the 'hiding' of hundreds of African artefacts under categories such as 'textiles', as Dinah Winch's presentation showed. Imaginative strategies can illuminate collections. Case studies from the V&A, Kirklees, British Chinese Artists Association and others provide rich evidence of the way in which artistic interventions can create electric connections

with museum items. Raj Pal from Sandwell Museums Services calls for more lateral thinking.

The thread that unites these perspectives and case studies is that of connections, or partnerships. Museums and communities could and should work together, just as artists and curators should. A multiplier effect can emerge, argues Amandeep Singh Madra, who enumerates the outcomes of the 1999 V&A exhibition on the Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms. The partnership between the V&A and London's Serpentine Gallery placed artists at the heart of the engagement, and brought in startling new insights about the nature of perception.

Connections/Disconnections provides a useful and varied collection of ideas, practical examples and perspectives. Naturally they are not the whole picture – other museums will have their own examples to cite and this collection does not claim to map out the pitfalls, which undoubtedly exist. The experience of the Arts Council's New Audiences programme, to which over a million pounds was allocated for funding partnerships between mainstream institutions and communities' arts organisations, is telling. The diversity of aims and working practices as well as a kind of 'cultural language', they found, made it clear that such initiatives need to be long-lasting. There are no quick fixes. Nor should critical voices like Josie Appleton's be ignored. She was trenchant in her assessment of Connections/Disconnections on the Spiked website: the trend of the conference, she claimed, would lead to a situation in which the role of the museum was devalued and 'the artefacts are mere props: things that museums want their visitors to dance and chatter around'.

Case histories described in Connections/Disconnections do not support that picture of fatuity. But in both the heritage and the cultural sphere, a methodology of working and tools for evaluation needs to be developed. What constitutes 'success'? Who assesses? What new tools do museums need if they are to expand their practice? Connections/Disconnections contributes to a debate that is still in a formative stage: disconnections are more common in the museum world at large than connections.

Editors Note This collection has been brought together over a year after the conference itself, and inevitably not all contributors kept their scripts, while others had spoken verbatim. However, the great majority of conference presentations are included. In many cases, presenters have helpfully brought their papers up to date, and their efforts are much appreciated. They are diverse in their approach and scope and the decision was taken to maintain that rather than work towards an overall uniformity of style and format. For instance, individuals have their own views as to whether the ethnically defining 'black' should be capitalised: the text respects their preferences. The structure of the conference itself has not been echoed in the way that the papers are arranged in this volume. The themes each paper picked up frequently strayed into another category so instead, the current structure seeks to follow the basic lines of thought.

1

The Balance of Power

The traditional museum was very clear in its assessment of where decision-making and power lay. Museums represented in Connections/Disconnections have discovered the benefits of shifting the balance. This means that they no longer see themselves as the defining experts, but hand over responsibility to individuals and groups from the communities whose experiences are being featured in their museums.

Viv Golding, Lecturer in the Museums Department of the University of Leicester, uses the experience of the Caribbean Women Writers' Alliance and their impact on the Horniman Museum to reflect on the transformative potential of feminist hermeneutics. For Gerard Corsane, his work in South Africa convinced him of the need not for 'outreach' but for 'in-reach', if the museum-community relationship is to have strength and reality. Fiona Davison, at that time Head of Hackney Museum, describes a system of collecting that was directed and carried out by teams drawn from the communities themselves.

1.1 Museums, In-reach and Intangible Heritage

Gerard Corsane

As the world increasingly moves into a global post-modern and post-colonial context, the traditional and modernist Western European notion of the museum is being challenged by academics, practitioners and museum users and non-users alike. Indeed, over the last couple of decades, institutions included under the name of 'museum' have been called on to be increasingly self-reflective and to make radical changes in order to meet the current and shifting needs of diverse societies and communities, particularly in terms of opening access and becoming more socially inclusive. These challenges are very pronounced in the 'new' democratic South Africa at the moment, where museums have become involved in deep-rooted transformation processes.¹ Although these processes have not yet run their full course throughout the country's museum and heritage sector, due to the radical changes required, the South African environment has provided a hot house for the formulation of new policies, implementation plans and developing initiatives that have drawn on exciting new museum thinking from within South Africa itself, as well as from other countries.

Drawing from the South African experience, the aim of this paper is to introduce four themes that appear to be linked to an international trend in which museums are moving from being object/collection-centred to being more people-orientated. The first three themes will be introduced briefly in order to provide an initial conceptual platform, and the fourth will become the main focus of this paper. The first of these themes concerns issues of knowledge production, representation, identity construction and processes of interpretation. The second considers whether or not the principles and practices of museum 'outreach' is enough for museums wishing to address the challenges regarding the need for increasing public participation and widening social inclusion; can the concept of 'in-reach'² take museum change and social action into a deeper dimension and allow for fuller transformations to take place? The third revolves around the difference between the degrees of public input that occurs when museums engage in 'negotiation' processes rather than simply employing 'consultation' mechanisms. The final theme to be dealt with will go deeper to the core of museum action to look at the value of expanding the heritage resource that museums work with, especially in terms of documenting and utilising intangibles. Starting from a more general discussion of my thinking relating to the first three themes as it has been coloured by my South African experiences, the article will move to a section that goes into a more detailed consideration of the value of intangibles, finishing with a section that shows how

the formulation of new policies and legislation in South Africa have brought together the threads of transformation, public participation, integrated heritage management and the use of intangibles.

In South Africa, as in many other countries, initial responses to the new challenges tended to focus on issues of representation and identity construction as they found expression in the public programmes of museums. With the influences of postmodernist thinking, new understandings of epistemological issues, critical theory and cultural studies, the authority of museums in knowledge production has become problematised. No longer can museums be viewed in the modernist paradigm as authorities that deal with absolutes that are transmitted in a linear fashion to their different publics. More and more, museums are being seen as sites of dialogue, where heritage resources are selected and communicated to users who are involved in the processes of interpretation. Museums have realised that they have to open up to a multiplicity of voices and different interpretations, and this has encouraged the development of new forms of exhibitions and learning programmes. Museum products delivered through these public programmes are now more open-ended, with users bringing their own prior knowledge and experience to engage with the evidence and information communicated. This has been an important step forward and continues to have a vital impact on museum action.

Another significant move was when museums in South Africa, as elsewhere, started to develop innovative and exciting outreach programmes, stimulating positive social change and drawing in new audiences. Museums have appointed 'outreach officers', often from communities that were consciously or unconsciously excluded by museums in the past, and/or have entered into outreach partnership networks with institutions, organisations and agencies that interact with various diverse communities and social groups in different areas of social need. These outreach officers and partnership networks have provided contact points between the museums and various stakeholder groups, encouraging increased public participation from people who may have previously found museums alienating and intimidating. However, there has been a danger that such programmes could be seen as little more than 'tack-on' projects that remain at the periphery of museum action. A key problem with this approach is that it has at times led to a rather fragmented targeting of different groups that draws heavily on resources and is not always easy in terms of sustained follow-up and ongoing participation.

The reason for the problems associated with outreach projects may be linked to the term 'outreach' itself. In the processes of knowledge production, the traditional modernist museum was viewed as an authority with its specialist collections and research experts. This meant that museums might have been perceived as being outside and in some way 'above' society as special places of both knowledge production and control. The use of the term outreach carries connotations of this, where the museum, positioned as the higher authority, has to reach out across some sort of expanse or divide to the rest of society. When perceived

in this way, groups that have been 'targeted' by the museum for outreach cannot really feel fully included and as a result tend to leave the responsibility to 'make things happen' to the museum. Although outreach programme activities may appear to start well, the museum sometimes has to work hard to persuade sustained interest and participation. Any divide between museums and society needs to be removed as it places real limitations on museum action. To help close the divide, it may be more beneficial to think in terms of museum-society 'in-reach'. Rather than being viewed as a set of separate individual programmes, in-reach can be seen as an underlying philosophy within museums that encourages an acceptable and constant two-way process of interaction between museums and social groups at a level of equality. In this, museums can reach into the societies of which they are a part and people will be allowed to reach into museums not simply as consumers of museum products, but rather as partners in decision-making and museum action processes. Allowing for this type of co-operation may be particularly useful as more and more museums turn to following a project-based approach to organising museum action in manageable blocks. Where this project-based approach is employed, the in-reach idea can become a fundamental principle that underpins museum action. This takes us to the third theme of the differences between 'consultation' and 'negotiation' processes.

When undertaking projects, many museums have recognised the value of consulting with their different constituencies and this has obviously brought benefits. However, consultation has its limitations, as it does not necessarily follow that a consulting body will act on the public input obtained. True transformation can only really occur when museums enter negotiation processes with all stakeholder groups. It is only where these deeper processes are present that real in-reach can take place. Through negotiation, museum personnel and members of the public are empowered as they discuss and learn from each other in an environment that allows for carefully balanced power sharing and mutual ownership in museum action. Although an ideal, the notion of museums being involved in negotiation processes is complex and raises a few crucial questions. Who should participate in negotiations and what should be the focus of these negotiations?

When considering who should be involved in negotiations, an immediate response would normally be 'representatives from the different communities surrounding the museum'. However, this is problematic for two reasons. First, how are these communities defined, as the whole notion of a community is a construct? Communities can be linked to groups of people who share a whole range of similar aspects including for example geographical locality, cultural background or a work environment. This means that in different contexts an individual can belong to a number of different communities and move between them. As a result it may be better for museums to think beyond simply working with different communities and rather how they can engage with stakeholders within the web of social networks. This leads to the second problem, as it makes it more difficult to identify and contact people who represent all interests within social networks. However, maybe

again the answer to this dilemma is linked to the original idea of in-reach. If museums open themselves up to social networks and advertise their willingness for social groups to send forward representatives, they may find that stakeholder representatives are attracted over time.

By building in opportunities for in-reach and negotiations, public participation can be integrated into all levels of the processes of decision-making and museum action in projects undertaken. This is important as it takes the democratisation and transformation of museums right to the central core of museum work and shows that negotiations need to centre around all aspects of museum action related to each project. This takes place from initial conceptualisation and the setting of objectives through to the ways things are communicated as products in the range of public programmes. The formation of forums for each project can provide the practical vehicle for public participation and negotiation. These forums can allow for ongoing and continued discussion during the project and can become the basis for long-term sustained interaction. It should be noted here, however, that working in forums would not necessarily mean that there would be no contestation or less conflict. Often total consensus cannot be reached, yet the forums will encourage people to consider different points of view and ideas and work towards acceptable solutions and projects.

Through allowing for in-reach and negotiation, museums will be stimulated to transform, and all involved will be encouraged to engage critically with the 'traditional' museum and look for fresh alternatives. These will draw on different knowledge systems and ways of preserving and communicating natural and cultural heritages in an integrated way. With the increasing democratisation of museum action, there have been a number of trends that have started to impact on museum transformation. In particular, museums internationally are being challenged, especially by people from social groups where the museum notion has been a foreign concept, regarding the heritage resources that museums have focused on in the past.

With these challenges, museums have started to consider broadening their traditional remit and have begun to look at their involvement in integrated heritage management, where both natural and cultural elements of heritage are covered, along with the relationships between them. Furthermore, within integrated heritage management the immovable and movable tangible, as well as intangible cultural heritage resources, can be approached and managed more holistically. Here, the immovable and movable tangible cultural heritage resources are perceived to include: cultural landscapes in rural, industrial and urban forms; the built environment; significant and sacred sites; burial grounds and graves; memorials; museum collections; along with the 'things that fall in-between'.³ The latter group of tangibles include: large industrial or agricultural machinery; material still in place in original contexts; large moving objects like trains and boats; and material in private collections removed from their original contexts.⁵ All of these tangible manifestations of culture and people's relationships to their environments are now being viewed together

Overleaf: A street scene near the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum & Arts and Crafts Centre, South Africa
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as equally important heritage resources. However, as mentioned above, there are also the intangible heritage resources that can, and should, be considered. These heritage resources will now be considered in more depth.

Intangible cultural heritage includes, amongst a myriad of other resources, senses of place, individual and public memories, oral traditions and testimonies, festivals, music, song, dance, ceremonial and ritual practices, games, different belief and knowledge systems, traditional skills, and everyday activities and life styles. The significance and value of these resources are becoming progressively more recognised. At the international level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has become increasingly interested in intangibles over the last ten years and has played an important role in their recognition as a valuable heritage resource.

The Living Human Treasures⁶ programme, initiated by UNESCO in 1993 and now with established guidelines,⁷ encourages member states to identify key cultural intangibles and then to identify bearers of the knowledge, skills and techniques relating to them as well as those who are able to pass them on to others. The second lead programme is the Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage⁸ set up in 1998. The goal of the project is to 'encourage governments, NGOs and local communities to take the lead in identifying, preserving and drawing attention to their oral and intangible heritage'.⁹ Its aim is to acknowledge the most 'remarkable examples' of cultural spaces linked to oral and intangible heritage, and other forms of traditional and popular cultural expressions that can be counted as intangible cultural heritage. In this second project, the proclamation of the first 19 masterpieces took place in May 2001,¹⁰ with a second proclamation ceremony scheduled for May 2003.

These lead projects have provided a focus around which conceptual and normative frameworks have started to be more clearly developed. There have been a number of key points in this process, but possibly only the more recent of these need to be considered here. In March 2001, UNESCO arranged for an International Round Table on Intangible Cultural Heritage: Working Definitions, which was held in Turin, Italy.¹¹ The definition drafted by this group of international experts suggests that intangible cultural heritage is:

peoples' learned processes along with the knowledge, skills and creativity that inform and are developed by them, the products they create, and the resources, spaces and other aspects of social and natural context necessary to their sustainability; these processes provide living communities with a sense of continuity with previous generations and are important to cultural identity, as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity. The scope of the domains may cover the following: oral cultural heritage; languages; performing arts and festive events; rituals and social practices; cosmologies and knowledge systems; beliefs and practices about nature.¹²



The Round Table also developed an important action plan,¹³ including a recommendation that UNESCO 'undertake early negotiations for the adoption of an international normative instrument in order to legally safeguard intangible cultural heritage'.¹⁴ The idea of developing such an instrument was considered during the 31st session of the General Conference in October 2001 and, although reservations were expressed by certain member states,¹⁵ 31C/Resolution 30 was adopted by the conference on 2 November 2001. The resolution invited Koïchiro Matsuura, the Director-General of UNESCO, 'to submit to it at its 32nd session a report on the situation calling for standard-setting and on the possible scope of such standard-setting, together with a preliminary draft international convention'¹⁶ for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

This has been a momentous step forward for the recognition of intangible cultural heritage, which when linked to 31C/Resolution 25, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,¹⁷ adopted at the same conference, makes a powerful combination. These two adopted resolutions will be able to support each other. By doing more for the recognition and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, a significant heritage resource, often previously neglected, will be opened up for understanding and working with cultural diversity; and with the recognition of the importance of cultural diversity, more will be done to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage that is so key in a number of cultures.

These UNESCO initiatives have been important in placing intangibles on the heritage map. They have raised an awareness and understanding of the value of intangible cultural heritage at an international level, and this will hopefully help to foreground intangible heritage resources even further, especially as these initiatives draw on what has already been done at regional, national and local levels in many parts of the world.

The increased prominence being accorded to intangible cultural heritage will soon place it on a far more equal footing with tangible cultural heritage and this will have important implications for museum action and heritage management. In the past, museum practitioners understood that intangibles are connected to, and always lie behind, the tangible material culture. Therefore intangibles were documented, but mainly for what they could provide in terms of context and associated information used to engage with the tangible material culture. Rather than seeing intangibles as a means to an end, more and more museum practitioners have been acknowledging the value of intangibles as worthy of documentation and preservation in their own right. This may become a crucial paradigm shift for museums, as it has opened up access and possibilities for a far more inclusive, integrated and holistic approach to museum action.

Internationally, the artificial boundaries between the different heritage resources, the disciplines that study and order them, and the institutions, organisations and agencies that have been established to preserve, conserve and facilitate interpretation and communication of these resources have become increasingly blurred. These boundaries should be removed altogether and the disciplines and bodies should engage in a more

holistic approach to heritage management through the development of collaborative networks, partnerships and public in-reach.

Where museums respond to this trend and turn from focusing mainly on the movable tangible heritage resources and start to expand their remit to work more extensively with the full range of heritage resources, they will open themselves to more people and become more democratic. By engaging more centrally with the preservation, understanding and communication of immovable tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage, museums will encourage participation from the peoples in whose cultures these resources are at least equally significant, if not more important than, the movable tangible cultural heritage. Fortunately the expanding International Council of Museums (ICOM) definition of the museum is allowing space for institutions to do this. The most recent clause added to the definition of the museum in the ICOM statutes reads that museums will include 'cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity)'.¹⁸ It is also important to note that the proposed main theme of the 2004 ICOM 20th General Conference to be held in Seoul, Korea, is Intangible Cultural Heritage.¹⁹ This should be a significant turning point for museums, as the conference should make museums more aware of the value of intangible cultural heritage in terms of engaging with and representing cultural diversity.

South African museums have been engaging with the ideas and issues outlined in the themes above. From the mid 1980s, a number of significant meetings, conferences and events took place that started the processes of transformation in the heritage and museums sector in South Africa. However, the most important turning point was probably the creation of the national Ministry and Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) in 1994, following the first democratic elections. This was significant as it brought together archives, museums and other heritage bodies into a single dedicated ministry and department with a direct focus on arts, culture, science and technology. Almost immediately, the Minister, Dr Ben Ngubane, set up the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) to work on his behalf to establish a process of consultation and negotiation to review policy and draft new policy guidelines. With regard to heritage, the process did indeed recommend a more integrated approach to heritage management and placed intangibles onto the agenda. The ACTAG Report,²⁰ resulting from extensive stakeholder input, was published in 1995 and became the foundation for longer-term transformation work.

Within this longer-term work the traditional notion of the museum, along with heritage management bodies and procedures, have been re-evaluated. There have been substantial processes of cultural policy reformulation, accompanied by transformation, restructuring and rationalising programmes and the drafting of new legislation that have impacted on culture, heritage and museums in South Africa. This process has not always been smooth as heritage, and what it is and how it is employed, is often contested.²¹ However,

although this contestation and dissonance will always be a feature, especially in a culturally diverse country like South Africa, the policies and legislation that have been developed attempt to lessen this dissonance by being more inclusive and encouraging a more integrated approach that gives equal status to a fuller range of cultural heritage resources.

Following on from the ACTAG Report, the 1996 White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage: all our Legacies, our Common Future,²² recognised the importance of both the tangible (movable and immovable) and intangible (living) heritage resources. Regarding the latter, the document noted that giving ‘attention to living heritage is of paramount importance for the reconstruction and development process in South Africa. Means must be found to enable song, dance, story-telling and oral history to be permanently recorded and conserved in the formal heritage structure.’²³ In order to do this, it was later stated in the document that the Ministry, and the proposed National Heritage Council (NHC), would ‘establish a national initiative to facilitate and empower the development of living heritage projects in provinces and local communities’.²⁴ It was then noted that ‘the recognition and promotion of living heritage is one of the most vital aspects of the Ministry’s arts, culture and heritage policy. The aim is to suffuse institutions responsible for the promotion and conservation of our cultural heritage with the full range and wealth of South African customs’.²⁵ The document continues by saying that:

the strategy will be to facilitate the development of a structure and environment in which projects can be initiated by communities themselves. Resources will be sought to: record living heritage practices; develop an inventory of living heritage resources; encourage awareness programmes amongst communities whose heritage has been neglected and marginalized; and encourage museums to conserve living heritage through audio-visual media.²⁶

This White Paper provided the policy platform for the drafting of new legislation. In terms of heritage, the White Paper was first followed by the drafting of the National Heritage Bill (No. 139 of 1998).²⁷ The preamble to this Bill was significant in that it stated that the proposed legislation would enable the introduction of a structure that would look to an integrated and holistic management of heritage, through good government at all levels. This was seen as necessary because of the importance of heritage to South Africans for cultural identity construction, spiritual well-being, nation-building and affirmation of cultural diversity.²⁸ This Bill is also of interest as it profiled the extensive scope of heritage resources that needed to be managed. It identified the national heritage as including both the ‘national estate and living heritage, which coexist in a dynamic relationship’.²⁹ The Bill listed the full range of immovable and movable tangible heritage resources as examples of the national estate³⁰ and then went on to note that living heritage:

means the intangible aspects of inherited culture, and may include (a) cultural tradition; (b) oral history; (c) performance; (d) ritual; (e) popular memory; (f) skills and techniques; and (g) the holistic approach to nature, society and social relationships, and must be integrated with the functions and activities of the NHC, the divisions and all other heritage authorities and institutions at national, provincial and local level.

In order to facilitate an integrated and holistic approach to heritage management, the Bill intended to make provision for two key things. The first was the constituting of the National Heritage Council, the second was the establishment of such a national heritage agency, along with the creation of further provincial heritage agencies. The bill as it stood was possibly a little too complex in that it included the draft legislation for two national bodies and in order to simplify the legislation and make it more manageable, it was passed back to the drafters for further work. Consequently, its content was separated out into the National Heritage Council Bill (No. 23 of 1999) and the National Heritage Resources Bill (No. 24 of 1999). These two bills were passed by parliament and promulgated as acts. The first of these was the National Heritage Council Act (No. 11 of 1999)³¹ that enabled the establishment of the NHC as a juristic body to develop, promote and protect the national heritage and to co-ordinate its management. In this act, living heritage is still seen as important and the NHC will play a key role in making sure that living heritage projects are developed. In relation to the six objects of the NHC, three are particularly important for intangible heritage culture. They are:

to protect, preserve and promote the content and heritage which reside in orature in order to make it accessible and dynamic; to integrate living heritage with the functions and activities of the Council and all other heritage authorities and institutions at national, provincial and local level; [and] to promote and protect indigenous knowledge systems, including but not limited to enterprise and industry, social upliftment, institutional framework and liberatory processes.³²

Again, regarding the functions, powers and duties of the NHC, two of the eleven listed in the act need to be highlighted here. These are that the NHC will:

co-ordinate the activities of public institutions involved in heritage management in an integrated manner to ensure optimum use of state resources; [and] monitor and co-ordinate the transformation of the heritage sector, with special emphasis on the development of living heritage projects.³³

The second of the two acts, the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999),³⁴ provided for the establishment of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).³⁵

As a statutory body, SAHRA is the administration agency responsible for the protection of the cultural heritage of South Africa. It is expected to co-ordinate the identification, assessment, grading, registration and management of heritage resources in the national estate through an integrated and interactive system. As part of this, it will be able to declare collections or objects as part of the national estate, control the exportation of cultural material and ensure that imported material was not acquired by illicit trade. SAHRA will set national norms and standards in heritage management and will encourage and facilitate the establishment of provincial heritage authorities, and work with local authorities, to ensure that heritage resources are managed by the level of government closest to the communities where the resources are placed. The aim of this is to allow for public participation from communities in the identification, protection and management of their own cultural heritage for the benefit of the national estate. The national estate:

may include places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage; historical settlements; landscapes and natural features of cultural significance; archaeological and palaeontological sites; graves and burial grounds, including ancestral and royal graves and graves of traditional leaders; graves of victims of conflict; and sites relating to the history of slavery in South Africa. The national estate includes movable objects such as those recovered from the soil or waters of South Africa; objects associated with living heritage; ethnographic and decorative art; objects of scientific interest; and books, documents, photographs, film material or sound recordings. A place or object is considered part of the national estate if it has cultural significance because of its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history, its possession of rare aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage, its strong or special association with a particular cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.³⁶

With DACST and SAHRA, along with the provisions for the establishment of a NHC, South Africa is (at least on paper) now fairly well placed in terms of policy, legislation and structures to facilitate integrated heritage management. Through the inter-departmental working relationships between DACST and other bodies like the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, along with the working relationships between the national structure and the Members of the Executive Councils (MECs) responsible for culture and heritage in the provinces, there is a solid network to ensure that integrated heritage management takes place at all levels. However, with the desire to involve communities in the processes of heritage management, what is the best way forward at a 'grass-roots' level?

If the way forward is to develop a more holistic approach to integrated heritage management that is more inclusive and allows for community-driven programmes of sustainable development, then museums in South Africa will need to keep broadening

out and become more involved in documenting and 'preserving' the full range of heritage resources, including intangibles. Through completing museum action projects that allow for in-reach and negotiation and that draw on the full spectrum of heritage resources, museums can be transformed and become more democratic and inclusive. Among the many newer initiatives in South Africa that have done a certain amount of work around these themes, there are three that readers are encouraged to look at as examples. All located in the Western Cape, they are the Robben Island Museum, the District Six Museum and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum and Crafts Centre.³⁷ All three do encourage in-reach and public participation, while the latter two are driven by local communities. They are all more involved in integrated heritage management and they have taken account of intangibles. All of these museums relate to a sense of place that is linked to the construction and exchange of individual and shared memories. As 'museums of memory', they are useful examples of how museums in South Africa have allowed for in-reach and integrated heritage management that engage with intangibles at the very core. They show how museum action can be transformed in culturally diverse societies, thereby making museums more inclusive, open and dynamic.

Footnotes 1 For more on the transformation of South African museums read: K. ka Mpumlwana, G. Corsane, J. Pastor-Makhurane & C. Rassool, 'Inclusion and the power of representation: South African museums and the cultural politics of social transformation' in R. Sandell (ed.), *Museums, Society, Inequality*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002, pp 244–61. 2 The term 'in-reach' started being used in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester in the 1999–2000 academic year. Oliver Douglas, one of the MA students, coined it in relation to museums and new media. However, it was through discussions with Ross Parry, a colleague, that the term started to take shape in the form used in this article. It should also be noted that the term in-reach, although used in a different sense, has also entered museum literature in America. See: H. Skamstrad, 'An agenda for American museums in the twenty-first century', *Dædalus*, Vol. 128, No. 3, 1999, p 128; and B. Sheppard, 'Do museums make a difference? Evaluating programs for social change', *Curator*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2000, p 64. 3 L. Young, 'Museums, heritage, and things that fall in-between', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1997, pp 7–16. 4 *Ibid*, p 11. 5 According to the UNESCO definitions on its Web site, 'the intangible heritage might be defined as embracing all forms of traditional and popular or folk culture, i.e. collective works originating in a given community and based on tradition. These creations are transmitted orally or by gesture, and are modified over a period of time through a process of collective recreation. They include oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivities, traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia, the culinary arts and all kinds of special skills connected with the material aspects of culture, such as tools and the habitat'. http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/html_eng/index_en.shtml (accessed June 2002). 6 Intangible Heritage: Living Human Treasures Web site http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/treasures/html_eng/index_en.shtml (accessed June 2002). 7 UNESCO. Guidelines for the establishment of a 'Living Human Treasures' system. Paris: UNESCO. Available online: http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/treasures/html_eng/method.shtml (accessed June 2002). 8 Intangible Heritage: Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity Web site <http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/index.shtml> (accessed June 2002) UNESCO. Implementation guide to the masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity. Paris: UNESCO. Available online: http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/masterp/html_eng/guide1.shtml

(accessed June 2002). ⁹ Intangible Heritage: Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity Web. site <http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/index.shtml> (accessed June 2002) ¹⁰ K. Matsuura. Address by Mr Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the occasion of the ceremony for the proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, UNESCO, 18 May 2001. Available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001225/122595e.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ¹¹ K. Matsuura. Address by Mr Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the occasion of the International Round Table: 'Intangible Cultural Heritage: Working Definitions' Turin, Italy, 14 March 2001. Available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001222/122219e.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ¹² UNESCO, Executive Board. Report on the preliminary study on the advisability of regulating internationally, through a new standard-setting instrument, the protection of traditional culture and folklore, 16 May 2001, paragraphs 26 & 27. Available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001225/122585e.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ¹³ Ibid, Annex. ¹⁴ Ibid, p 2. ¹⁵ UNESCO. Oral report of the Chairperson of Commission IV. General Conference 31st session, Paris, 12 November 2001, pp 6–7. Available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001244/124435e.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ¹⁶ UNESCO. Records of the General Conference 31st Session, Paris, 15 October to 3 November. Volume 1: Resolutions. Paris: UNESCO, 2002, p. 67. Available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001246/124687e.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ¹⁷ Ibid, pp 61–64. ¹⁸ ICOM Statutes, Article 2, Clause 1. (viii) – Definitions adopted by the 16th General Assembly of ICOM (The Hague, the Netherlands, 5 September 1989) and amended by the 18th General Assembly of ICOM (Stavanger, Norway, 7 July 1995), with modifications adopted by the 20th General Assembly of ICOM (Barcelona, Spain, 6th July 2001). Available online: <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/icom/statutes.html#2> (accessed June 2002). ¹⁹ B-m.Kim, 'Greetings of the Chairman, ICOM Korea', in 20th General Conference of the International Council of Museums in 2004, Seoul, Korea. Seoul: Korean National Committee of ICOM & Korea National Tourism Organisation, 2000. Available online: http://user.chollian.net/~pll/public_html/Greetings.htm (accessed June 2002). ²⁰ The ACTAG work drew from extensive consultation and negotiation processes and provided the basis for much of the subsequent policy formulation and legislation development. See: Arts and Culture Task Group, Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Pretoria: ACTAG, 1995. ²¹ See: J.E. Tunbridge & G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. ²² Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, White paper on arts, culture and heritage: all our legacies, our common future, Pretoria, Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, ch. 5, items 1–4. Available online: http://www.dacst.gov.za/arts_culture/artculwp.htm (accessed June 2002). ²³ Ibid, Item 2. ²⁴ Ibid, Item 28. ²⁵ Ibid. ²⁶ Ibid, Item 29. ²⁷ Republic of South Africa, National Heritage Bill, B 139–98, Pretoria: Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and technology, 1998. Available online: <http://www.gov.za/bills/1998/b139-98.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ²⁸ Ibid, p 2. ²⁹ Ibid, Chapter 1, Part 1, Section 3, p 12. ³⁰ Ibid, Chapter 1, Part 1, Section 4, p 12 & 14. ³¹ Republic of South Africa. National Heritage Council Act (11 of 1999). Available online: <http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/legislation/1999/act11.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ³² Ibid, Section 4, Items c, d) and e), p 4, lines 4–11. ³³ Ibid, Section 10 Items 1 e) and f), p 6, lines 38–41. ³⁴ Republic of South Africa. National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999). Available online: <http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/legislation/1999/act25.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ³⁵ See the SAHRA Web site home page <http://www.sahra.org.za> (accessed June 2002). ³⁶ SAHRA Web site. 'Introduction'. <http://www.sahra.org.za/frame.htm> (accessed June 2002). See also: Republic of South Africa. National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999). Chapter 1, Part 1, Section 3, pp 12 & 14. Available online: <http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/legislation/1999/act25.pdf> (accessed June 2002). ³⁷ A colour slide presentation of these three institutions was delivered during the seminar session of the V&A conference after the content of this article was presented. Web sites for these museums and others in the Western Cape province of South Africa can be accessed through Wits University's 'South African Museums' web page <http://sunsite.wits.ac.za/mus/sa.htm#western> (accessed June 2002).

1.2 Questions of Cultural Authority: Drawing on Diverse Perspectives and Interpretations

Dr Vivien Golding

Ain't got no home. Ain't got no shoes. Ain't got no money. Ain't got no class.
 Ain't got no home. Ain't got no skirts. Ain't got no sweaters. Ain't got no perfume.
 Ain't got no fear. Ain't got no mind. Ain't got no mother. Ain't got no culture.
 Ain't got no friends. Ain't got no schooling. Ain't got no love. Ain't got no name.
 Ain't got no ticket. Ain't got no token. Ain't got no God.

And what've I got? Why am I alive anyway? Yeah, what've I got, nobody can take away?

I got my life. I got my freedom. I got my life. I got my freedom. I got my hair. I got my head. I got my brain. I got my eyes. I got my nose. I got my mouth. I got my smile. I got my tongue. I got my chin. I got my neck. I got my breast. I got my heart. I got my soul. I got my back. I got my self. I got my arms. I got my hands. I got my fingers. I got my legs. I got my feet. I got my toes. I got my liver. I got my blood.

I got life ... No body gonna take it away.

Nina Simone (1968)¹

This paper opens with these words, first sung in her incomparable voice by Nina Simone, for two reasons. Firstly, the motivation to foreground this talk with the voice of a Black Woman has philosophical and political underpinnings that arise from feminist-hermeneutics (Golding 2000).² Feminist-hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation and understanding, which is built from the disparate sources of philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer 1981) and Black feminist thought (Hill-Collins 1991; Philip 1992). The theory is distinctive in the literature of museum studies for privileging elements that are important to the lived experiences of many museum visitors, such as music, art and literature, alongside a traditional theoretical positioning and my use of the song provides an example of the theory in practice.³

The paper employs feminist-hermeneutics to question the cultural authority of the museum and specifically to argue that Black women's voices have been suppressed and erased in the museum discourse, but the paper does not indulge in pessimistic nihilism. Instead, it optimistically points to a way in which this museum-silencing can be addressed

and presents a success story for opening up the museum to a range of diverse perspectives and interpretations, to benefit both the museum and the Black community.

The second reason for opening the paper with Simone lies in the text of the song. The words of 'Ain't got no – I got life' appear to revolve around a new concept of embodiment, which is central to the tenets of feminist-hermeneutics, by presenting a holistic view of the mind and the body in an historico-political social space. In brief, this notion is diametrically opposed to the Enlightenment view that privileges the mind, or the male mind, to speak more precisely, in an almost disembodied sense. In contradistinction, the song initially describes the body in a socially constricting location of want. Then, the song text approaches the innate wealth of the whole person, both mind and body, before finally culminating in the celebration of woman in an auspicious space of freedom and hope.

To summarise the aims of this paper in the context of the museum, Simone's song is employed to emphasise the active role of an embodied visitor in an expanded space, which is theorised as the museum frontiers (Philip 1992). The paper argues that facilitating an active-visitor experience requires the museum to relinquish some of its traditional cultural authority, to share both ontological and epistemological power with the visitor. It further argues that sharing advantages both the museum and the visitor. The advantage to the museum in adopting a non-hierarchical stance lies in the possibility of widening the museum's traditional audience and complying with the British government's agenda on social inclusion, while the advantage to the new museum audience lies in the opening up of a future realm of possibility. For individuals and groups who were previously marginalised within the walls of the museum and in the wider world this attitude denotes a welcome liberatory praxis.

The structure of the paper is determined by the theoretical basis of the material presented, which may be new to many readers since the theory is built from areas that are traditionally separate fields of study in the academy. To overcome the difficulty in reading newly conjoined theories, the paper is divided into three sections. In the first sections, my specific use of central terminology 'feminist-hermeneutics', and 'frontiers' is clarified with reference to a particular field-site case study. In the second and third sections, the large and rather abstract claims made for challenging the cultural authority of the museum in the introduction are justified and elucidated with reference to concrete examples of feminist-hermeneutic work in practice.

The focus of attention in these two sections is on a collaborative venture between the Caribbean Women Writer's Alliance (CWWA) and the Horniman Museum in South London, to emphasise the power of community-museum alliances.⁴ Specifically, the way in which the Horniman adopts a radically innovative philosophico-political stance and works on a cooperative platform with a new audience is discussed. Constructivist theory reinforces the feminist-hermeneutic stance in these sections to illuminate the ways in which the CWWA collaboration permits new interpretations to enter the discourse. The (1993) Museum

Training Institute (MTI) Report and the (1999) Macpherson Report are also briefly considered since they highlight the urgency for museums to address the issues of racism and social deprivation that surround the lives of their communities.

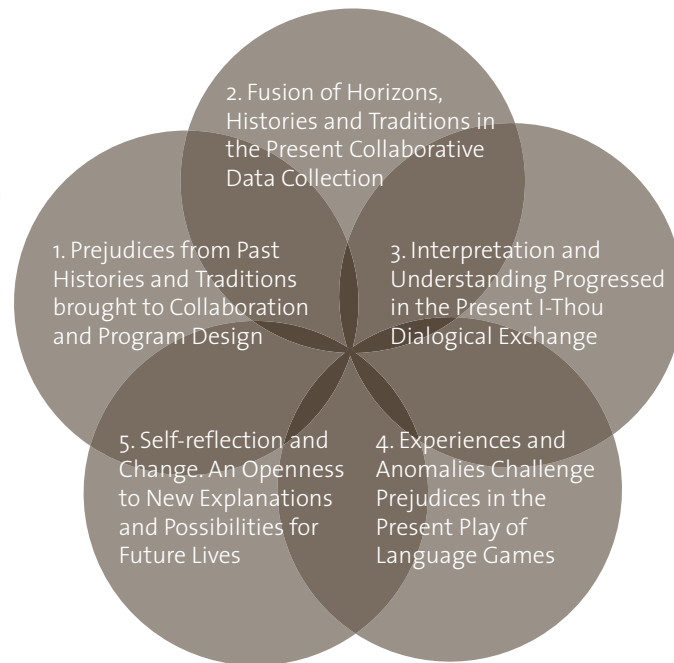
In the third sections of the paper the positive impact of the successful CWWA collaboration on the public face of the museum is highlighted and three projects are outlined. Finally, some conclusions are drawn and recommendations for future work are made.

Feminist-hermeneutics is developed from the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans George Gadamer (1981) and the feminism elucidated in Black women's writing, especially the texts of Marlene Nourbese Philip (1992), Toni Morrison (1984, 1988, 1998) and Patricia Hill-Collins (1991). Gadamer's hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation and understanding that has its basis in dialogical exchange. Philosophical-hermeneutics importantly defends the notion of truth in the arts and provides a theoretical framework for examining personal meaning-making in the museum, but it fails to fully address the historico-political realm in which museum truths are constructed. Black feminist thought vitally addresses the hierarchies of power that validate 'knowledge' in the museum of the 21st century. Black feminism demands a questioning approach to the concept of knowledge in the museum, asking 'for whom is this knowledge constructed and why?' Feminist-hermeneutics facilitates a special form of dialogue that empowers an active visitor to re-read the underlying meanings of objects displayed in the museum, by focusing attention on the location of the objects in the museum space and the accompanying curatorial texts. Most importantly, feminist-hermeneutic dialogue describes a process of understanding and interpretation that empowers the museum visitor to write back, in a visual as well as a textual sense, to the authoritative framing of knowledge by the curator.

Diagram 1 overleaf describes a circular process of increasing understanding and clarifies this feminist-hermeneutic dialogue as it applies to the development of collaborative project work in the museum context. In feminist-hermeneutics, following the Gadamerian discourse, all understanding is predicated on a notion of respectful dialogue with another: a speaker, or an object of art. For successful communication and understanding to occur, it is essential that all participants embark on the dialogical process with an open attitude, to reflect upon their prejudices, which inevitably arise out of their particular world-views or personal histories and the wider traditions from whence these emerge. The movement towards greater understanding is essentially achieved through reflexive dialogical exchange that is reminiscent of the to and fro of a conversation, the play of language games that challenge our prejudices. This process of understanding can never be completed, but only adjourned when the participants decide to halt their discussion, for there is always the possibility of resuming dialogue again on another occasion. It is in this sense that the present moment of understanding must draw elements of the past and project elements of future perspectives or horizons into this circular location of understanding.

This is a useful viewpoint for increasing opportunities for learning and intercultural

Diagram 1:
Feminist-hermeneutic
circle of interpretation
and understanding



understanding in a museum and community context because it does not elide and erase diversity but facilitates understanding in and through the complexities of difference. Feminist-hermeneutics in the museum also importantly contends that all dialogical exchange requires us to pay careful attention to artefacts from our contemporary position. This ultimately involves self-reflection, and a transformation of our prejudiced opinions in the light of continuing new knowledge. The feminist-hermeneutic circle of understanding is thus vitally empowering because it facilitates a re-construction of what counts as knowledge in the museum and extends this understanding to the wider world, thus permitting new identities to be formed and extended possibilities for future lives to be realised. To illustrate the ways in which the work of feminist-hermeneutics can enrich the lives of the museum and the community participants, some information on the particular CWWA field-site will prove useful.

The CWWA field-site is characterised as lying at the ‘frontiers’ or the borderlands between the Horniman Museum and a number of local venues including the Caribbean Centre of Goldsmiths College (Philip 1992). These border-regions are generally perceived as danger-zones, areas of threat and ordeal, but in disseminating the CWWA-Museum collaboration the aim is to allay fears, to inspire and to encourage further work at museum frontiers. The CWWA work demonstrates that the museum borderlands are spaces of risk but also places which promise redemption, when perceived danger is honestly confronted in a supportive environment. In feminist-hermeneutics, the frontiers are locations where individuals might risk their prejudices or comfortable notions of themselves and change traditional group allegiances.⁵

The notion of a frontier field-site importantly dislodges hierarchical notions of museum as a vital centre reaching out to a subservient community at the periphery. This field-site is clearly not an ‘ancient and settled’ location, into which the museum worker might enter as an expert, ‘beamed in from another planet’ (Clifford 1997: 2; Spivak 1988:150). The field rather ‘opens onto complex histories of dwelling and traveling’ and provides us with a number of alternative mini-centres, one of which is the Horniman Museum (Clifford 1997; Braidotti 1994).

The Horniman Museum is located in the London Borough of Lewisham, but borders on both Lambeth and Southwark; all multicultural areas of South London disadvantaged by poverty. Lambeth is ‘the twelfth most deprived area in the country and the seventh most deprived area in London’ (Lambeth Council Report 1998: 3). Part of its population is ranked as living in the third most deprived ward in London and the fifth in England (1998:2). These statements are based on ‘twelve indicators’ of deprivation that are listed under seven categories: Economic, Education, Low Income, Housing, Environment, Crime and Health.

There is evidence of a multicultural population in this area of South London since Roman times, and the Horniman Free Museum has served its diverse communities since its inception in 1901 (Anim-Addo 1995). The Horniman works in close collaboration with teachers, curriculum advisors, the inspectorate and teacher training establishments. Teachers form a large proportion of the CWWA membership, many of whom live or work in the borough of Lambeth.⁶

The CWWA embraces mainly, but not exclusively, Black women. Regular workshops, conferences and support groups, held at the Caribbean Centre of Goldsmiths College, are a vital and pleasant means of international networking and provide opportunities for learning about the culture of a particular community. The CWWA currently has 130 members, with ages ranging from teens to elders and its membership lives all over the world.

The CWWA was originally formed in 1993 to provide a forum for dialogue and, in particular, to facilitate new forms of writing by peoples whose voices had been silenced by hierarchies of power in the academy. A quarterly journal, *Mango Season*, is published with this aim. The Horniman contributes pieces on museums and publicises collaborative ventures, such as the Re-writing the Museum workshops, Black History Month workshops and the now annual Emancipation Day event.⁷

Joan Anim-Addo observes how this event enabled a community of two hundred or so people, to come ‘together out of a shared need to remember an important moment in African-Caribbean history’ (Anim-Addo 1998a: 93). Emancipation Day marks the end of the Transatlantic slave trade and the Horniman first celebrated 160 years of emancipation on 1 August 1997, in its garden conservatory. Sixteen African-Caribbean contributors – one for each decade of freedom – performed their poetry, stories and music to make the evening a healing experience of remembrance for all.

The Horniman is able to make reparation by means of collaborative events such as this. In this case, the largely historical artefacts from Africa were made more personally meaningful to people of African-Caribbean heritage, whose ancestors had been dehumanised for financial gain under the triangular trade system during colonial times. The Emancipation Day events complement, widen and render the museum discourse contemporaneous, since the official museum readings of traditional African artefacts on display are re-valued by African-Caribbean collaborators, who set them within new systems of knowledge that continue to survive and to be replenished by means of oral culture.

On Emancipation Day, Caribbean culture sends out a praise-song to an enduring African heritage by means of its oral tradition, its fantastic and humorous tales about overcoming the mighty that helped to nourish people through the trauma and tragedy of transatlantic slavery. Emancipation Day provides a powerful re-memory of the tragedy of transatlantic enslavement, reaffirming lost and 'discredited knowledge' (Morrison 1984). Toni Morrison elucidates the concept of African-Caribbean knowledge, 'the way in which Black people looked at the world', which she imaginatively reconstructs in her novels as a 'blend' and

...[an] acceptance of the supernatural and a profound rootedness in the real world at the same time with neither taking precedence over the other. ... And some of those things were discredited only because Black people were discredited therefore what they knew was "discredited". (Morrison 1984:342)

The possibility of reaffirming discredited knowledge during Emancipation Day events is explained by feminist-hermeneutics as an overlapping of time and space, which the special location of the museum provides, to create a gap or Clearing⁸ in our everyday common-sense thinking. This jolts our minds as empathetic readers of museum artefacts, to actively listen in the process of feminist-hermeneutic dialogue. On Emancipation Day, active listening is empowering. It enables the conscious 're-remembering' and articulation of 'unspeakable thoughts' that lie 'unspoken', the ghosts of the Middle Passage (Morrison 1988:199). These ghosts from the time of the Triangular Slave Trade, or more precisely the Transatlantic Holocaust, loudly haunt the spaces of many museums, demanding to be 're-remembered' in ways that are 'painful' but 'not destructive' for all communities (Morrison 1998:34). Emancipation Day events at the Horniman provide evidence that re-memory can ultimately be a healing experience in a museum; a community of women gathering to raise their voices as one; singing in a 'collective sharing' of that excruciating information, which 'heals the individual and the collective' (Morrison 1998:33).⁹

In addition to Emancipation Day events, the series of re-writing the museum workshops culminating in the publication, *Another Doorway: Visible inside the Museum* also mark collective acts of healing re-memory for all collaborators, members of the museum and CWWA (Anim-Addo 1998b).¹⁰ The re-writing workshops, led by a number of international

CWWA members including Marlene Nourbese Philip and Olive Senior, occurred over a three year period from 1996. Joan Anim-Addo concisely describes the purpose of this rewriting, 'to insert a hitherto largely absent presence, that of the Black woman's, into the museum context' (Anim-Addo 1998a:93). Anim-Addo also notes a particular benefit for the museum that was marked by an increase in Black and non-traditional visitors.¹¹

The museum was able to attract this new audience by permitting the CWWA to assert themselves as subjects, through the allocation of an open Clearing location of dialogical exchange that also facilitated their creative-writing. Successful collaboration with the CWWA enhanced Horniman practice by empowering 'a powerful infidel heteroglossia', which is akin to 'a feminist speaking in tongues' (Haraway 1991:181). The CWWA argue that collaboration expands the museum audience by providing a new site of polyvocality, where a wider range of experiences and interpretations can find expression, alongside the dry authorial tone of the traditional museum label.

Traditional museum labels can appear to condone a 'silencing' of the cultures on display with their scant attention to 'dates and materials' (Philip 1998:136-137). By contrast CWWA collaboration offers a range of informed perspectives that expand our view of other people and of ourselves. The following poem by Joan Anim-Addo will help illustrate this contention. The artefact that inspired this poem, reproduced alongside it, was labelled *Maternity Figure, Afo, Wood* at the time of the workshops, when it formed part of a temporary display in the Natural History Gallery.¹²

In the poem, Anim-Addo pays homage to Toni Morrison's 'Beloved', and further privileges 'the Black woman's resistance' (Anim-Addo 1998a:100; Morrison 1988). It is a multiple resistance: to the dehumanised role under enslavement, and to the position of Black women in the museum today. Black women are largely absent in the museum, which accounts in part for the fact that so many CWWA members selected the Afo 'maternity figure' as an inspiration for their creative writing. Anim-Addo notes that when Black women are visible in the museum they occupy low-status posts – 'cleaners' rather than 'curators' (Anim-Addo 1998a:100).¹³

Lois Silverman's recent analysis of 'constructivism' in the museum elucidates the value of feminist-hermeneutic work such as Emancipation Days and Re-writing the Museum workshops (Silverman 1995). Silverman's thesis can be employed to argue that these events provide prime examples of how the museum might relinquish its traditional or 'expert' discourses, in favour of facilitating the more 'personal and subjective ways in which visitors make meaning' (Silverman 1995: 165). Collaborative events such as these take account of the diverse 'needs' of museum visitors. Specifically, collaboration with CWWA has helped to determine exactly which needs of the British Caribbean community 'can be met' in the museum, and 'through what techniques' (Silverman 1995: 167).

Silverman highlights the human needs of 'individuality', uniqueness and autonomy, as well as the need for 'community' affiliation and interdependence (Silverman 1995: 164).

Was that Sethe or her sister? (after Toni Morrison's *Beloved*)

maternity figure of woman
on Ashanti stool
suckling child
– wooden, still –
milk-breathed
and at one

maternity figure of a woman
another situation we know full well
no child to suckle. Child done gone.
Sold. Mother wooden – still –
too drained, too whiplashed.
A stone; no stool.

A stone is not a stool.
In this hard place no comfort; no rest
where body thieves
separate sister, husband, infant
Even the wisdom of elders absent

How to cook without a stool?
How to grind peppers for the pot
with earth spirit not knowing libation
and palm oil an acrid memory?
In this corner, the heart of man
is only stone

echoing a faint, faint
bu-dum, bu-dum, bu-dum.
So, infant body wooden now
stiff still. No to mothering
in this stone place.
No. No. No-oooh!
Howling into stone
On stone/through stone
Maternity figure of a woman
Wooden. Still.

Anim-Addo 1998b: 39–40



Maternity Figure, Afo, Wood
Nigeria, 19th Century
© Horniman Museum, London

Emancipation Days and the Re-writing the Museum workshops provide museum visitors with an opportunity to fulfil their needs in both of these areas, or in what Doug Worts concisely terms the 'personal' perspective and the 'collective' perspective (Worts 1995: 189). These personal and collective needs are intimately related during CWWA collaboration, and satisfied through the specific 'techniques' of feminist-hermeneutics (Silverman 1995: 167).

In addition, this paper argues that CWWA partnership work fulfills an important recommendation laid out in the Macpherson Report¹⁴ –

The importance of and the need for genuine multi-agency partnership and co-operation to combat racism, and to bring together all sections of the community with this aim. ... There must be a *multi-stakeholder* approach involving all parts of the community. (Macpherson 1999: 45.18, 45.20) [my emphasis]

Collaboration with CWWA certainly seems to promote a feeling that the museum is sensitive, 'not just to the experience of the majority but to minority experience also' (Macpherson 1999: 6.32). However, reading the Macpherson Report leads me to question the museum as an institution, and specifically to examine our 'policies and methods' for signs of 'institutional racism' (Macpherson 6.18). Macpherson follows Stokely Carmichael in defining institutional racism that 'originates in the operation of anti-black attitudes and practice' (Macpherson 1999: 6.22). In terms of the framing of 'knowledge' in the museum, CWWA contends that 'a sense of superior group position' prevailed during collaboration, since the traditional displays were constructed by a specialist 'white' middle-class profession (ibid). Nevertheless, the museum hierarchy did encourage its Education Department to collaborate with CWWA, and thereby increase the construction of new 'knowledge' at the museum frontiers. Additionally, an increased Black woman's visibility led to some liaison over the Horniman's African Worlds exhibition in 1999.

Some CWWA members were encouraged by their positive experiences of collaboration and committed themselves to join the Horniman Museum's Community Consultative Forum (CCF). The CCF worked, to a certain extent, alongside the Anthropology Consultative Panel (ACP) during the construction of African Worlds. The ACP is responsible for the layered text in the gallery that gives an expert academic view and another insider view from people with an intimate knowledge of the displayed objects. The CCF contribution is less obvious than the ACP input, but this collaboration with other museum departments does mark a vital beginning for the Horniman Museum.¹⁵

Collaboration with the museum on public exhibitions demonstrates a commitment to 'relinquish absolutist authority', and disrupts the hierarchical knowledge flow away from the museum as centre and font of wisdom (Silverman 1995). It enables meanings to be constructed afresh from new multi-centres by readers from outside of the museum: teachers, young students, artists and creative writers. This expansion of the museum

boundaries is valuable and stimulating for museum discourse since it challenges any tendency to fixed views and prevents thought from stagnating.

The museum's director, Janet Vitmayer and, till January 2002 its keeper of anthropology, Anthony Shelton are responsible for supporting this initiative. They are aware of the need to counteract the traditional museum view of the 'other,' as an exotic curiosity, a feared or noble savage. The inferior status implied by this lens of western capitalist perceptions justified the exploitation of what was necessarily regarded as the underbelly of a divisive society. Women everywhere, the white working classes and Black colonial or post-colonial subjects share this history of oppression. A dissident feminist-hermeneutic discourse lies at the heart of this paper and suggests that, from the silence of shared experiences painfully achieving speech in the museum, people inside and outside of the museum may glimpse alternative possibilities for working together, and break out of the limiting moulds imposed upon them.

For example, the innovative African Worlds exhibition is specifically designed with gaps and blank text panels so as to accommodate new voices that can be gathered through future programming. In this way, the museum exhibition mirrors the CWWA collaboration where the linear model of museum communication is challenged with a new dialogical model of communication. The dialogical model is circular and facilitates collaborators in their pursuit of alternative readings or interpretations from those viewpoints, which appear natural or established in the traditional museum and in society.

Three projects were initiated alongside the opening of the African Worlds exhibition. The South Hall Balcony area (situated above the African Worlds gallery) was dedicated to a responses project, hosting visitor reactions to the exhibition, a Black Artists in Residency project and the exhibition that marked the completion of the Inspiration Africa! schools project. These projects profitably develop aspects of the paper in the wider context of the museum and they provide specific models for future practice at other museums.¹⁶

In the Black Artist in Residency project the Horniman Museum's long-term collaboration with the 198 Gallery in South London was extended to feature the work of six Black artists over a 2–3 year period. Individual artists were invited to make a personal response to the African Worlds Exhibition. Each artist has an initial six-week period of research in the museum library and object store, followed by a two months of workshops for visiting school, college and family groups. Finally, the museum hosts a six-week exhibition of all the work produced as a response to the African Worlds gallery.

At the time of writing, four popular residencies have been facilitated by the museum. Rita Keegan's Transformations used the idea of masking in relation to contemporary culture. Her workshops considered issues of body image and traditional notions of beauty. Maria Amidu's Finder's Keepers explored the notion of museum ownership through alternative narrative and storytelling devices. Her workshops investigated the possibilities of free association and meaning-making with visual elements in a range of diverse 'book' formats.

Gottfried Donker's Whose Africa? wallpaper installation disrupted the museum's feeling of comfort with the display of Benin art and interrogated the British sacking of Benin City in 1897. His workshops made surrealist play with historic and contemporary images of the participants and the museum. Faisal Abdul Allah's installation sought to reveal aspects of the museum 'unsaid', to use a term from feminist-hermeneutics. The unsaid is that which lies behind the museum displays, the construction of knowledge by curators working behind the solid wooden doors of their offices and the wealth of material, which lies hidden in the museum stores. Faisal replaced the solid doors with glass ones and made a photomontage of the stores, while his workshops utilised the handling collection and permitted participants to re-present the objects and construct new narratives. These artists have all provided the opportunity for visitors to work with a professional artist in the South Hall Balcony area, and Black artists have been enabled to serve as positive role models for Black youth.

In the visitor responses project the Horniman provides A5-sized response cards to elicit a visual or written response from visitors to the objects displayed in the African Worlds gallery. Visitors have also been encouraged to remark upon their 'identity' by writing a brief description of themselves on the cards. The comment 'strong woman' often features in this section, which is heartening for feminist observers.¹⁷

Every two months, a new selection of the cards is displayed on the South Hall Balcony. In their responses visitors are often moved to remark on their fascination with each others' comments as well as with the exhibition. A 'mum, wife, teacher, SW London', notes

This is a wonderful exhibition. We have enjoyed our visit very much. Man's creativity is fascinating. I have loved reading the response cards – also a testimony to creativity and individuality. They make a brilliant display in themselves. (Helen Priest. 17.04.00)

Another respondent, a 'student, female' states

Fantastic selection of exhibits. In response to other comments – Mr and Mrs Lewis and child misunderstand the richness and truth in these artefacts. We all fear what we do not understand and without museums like the Horniman we do not learn about cultures and see past the philosophy of "I don't like it because I don't understand it". May this free museum live long and inform us all. (Pam Glew 10.3.00)

The tremendous popularity and the rich responses elicited by this response card activity led the museum to consider extending the work of facilitating dialogue between the museum and the visitors as well as between visitors in the new building.¹⁸

A cross-curricular project, Inspiration Africa!, was funded by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in September 1999. The Museum was awarded £72,000 by the DfEE for work spanning a two-year period with twelve schools: six in the borough

of Lewisham and six in the borough of Bromley. Each year, the Inspiration Africa! team worked with two special needs, two primary and two secondary schools. All of the project work was designed to spring from a close attention to museum objects and then to cross the curriculum areas of Art, English and Information and Computer Technology (ICT). An enormous amount of successful art, creative writing and ICT work has been completed with the schools, and the team-leaders are investigating the possibility of further funding, which would allow the project to be extended to other London boroughs. The success of the project is attributed to close collaboration between the Inspiration Africa! team-leaders and the partnership approach taken by the participating school-teachers.¹⁹

In conclusion, the special feminist-hermeneutic dialogue outlined in this paper has enabled the construction of alternative programmes at the museum frontiers and this has permitted a greater intellectual access to museum objects. Feminist-hermeneutics has facilitated informed debate and acknowledged the perspectives of people outside the museum, empowering them to construct alternative truths that oppose the notion of a single truth and objective knowledge. These empowerment programmes have helped to develop the museum as an institution that holds itself socially responsible by providing mechanisms for learners to shape the future of the museum, alongside their own programmes.

In addition to the programming of special events and activities that follow a feminist-hermeneutic approach, the paper has outlined specific examples of the way in which this vital notion of dialogue with the museum audience has filtered into the public spaces of the Horniman and illustrated the wider benefit of collaboration.

Finally, I should like to conclude with an invitation to engage in further dialogue with people inside and outside of the museum. The arts organisation responsible for collaboration on 'Inspiration Africa!' can be contacted at www.clothofgold.org.uk, Joan Anim-Addo can be contacted at the English Department of Goldsmith College, London and I can be contacted at the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester vmg4@le.ac.uk. We wish you all well with collaborative ventures.

Footnotes 1 *Ain't Got No (I Got Life)* from 'Hair'. Words by James Rado and Gerome Ragni. Music by Galt MacDermot © 1968 EMI Catalogue Partnership, EMI U Catalog Inc and EMI United Partnership Ltd, USA. Worldwide print rights controlled by Warner Bros. Publications Inc/IMP Ltd. Reproduced by permission of International Music Publications Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 1-005918. Invoice date 10.10.02. Account number 002186. 2 The term Black with a capital letter 'B' is employed in this paper when speaking about Black people. This is a gesture of radical politics since the lower case 'b' is widely used to simply denote skin colour. 3 Museum is taken as a generic term throughout this paper to include art galleries. 4 This collaborative venture formed part of my PhD (2000) research and an earlier version of my theoretical approach to the project work can be read in Golding 1999. 5 For Gadamer, addressing the prejudices inherent in our cultural traditions opens individual human beings to a transformation that is liberating because it constitutes a 'demolition and shattering of the familiar' way of perceiving the world and the peoples of the world. The new view widens individual horizons, by pointing to new aspects of the self in declaring "This art thou" and also demanding that "Thou must alter thy life!" (Gadamer 1977: 104). 6 CWWA teachers now collaborate on museum INSET, organise school trips for their students and visit with family members at the weekend. An example of Horniman/CWWA work with the school-system, which is free to booked groups, is described elsewhere (Golding 1996). 7 In this section, I focus on the first Emancipation Day in 1997, for the sake of clarity. But I must emphasise here that the 1997 event was not a 'one-off'. The museum hosted its second Emancipation Day in the Music Room in 1998; in 1999, our assembly returned to the Conservatory. 8 Clearing is a term from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. It has a capital 'C' in feminist-hermeneutics to denote a special space of philosophical, spiritual and political significance. The Clearing location provides opportunities to expand the sense of self and increase the potential for future life. 9 A collection of CWWA poetry performed during the Horniman Emancipation Day events are gathered in the publication *Voice, Memory, Ashes* (Ross and Anim-Addo 1999). 10 'In addition, writing from within the museum allows the kind of appropriating of texts which can only bring more Black women and their families into museums to look with fresh eye and to validate their interpretations.' (Anim-Addo J. 1998a:103) 11 This benefit may be regarded as a mere box-ticking exercise by cynics. More importantly in feminist-hermeneutics, the overriding value for the museum lies in providing an open dialogical space, where historical malpractice can be acknowledged and a new non-hierarchical position adopted to consider possibilities for future work. 12 For the Horniman Anthropology Department under Anthony Shelton, this temporary location and display without any community consultation held an underlying historical message, that Black culture was closer to the animal kingdom than it was to European culture. This abhorrent factor and the successful CWWA collaboration influenced the African Worlds Gallery, which opened in 1999. 13 This observation is endorsed 'in hard data' by the 1993 Museum Training Institute report, which highlights the number of Black staff in curatorial/managerial roles as less than 1% of this elite workforce (MTI 1993: 7.6). 14 The Mcpherson Report examines the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, and mounting a challenge to racism was a major concern, one which CWWA members brought with them to the museum. 15 The ACP comprises the Horniman curator, Anthony Shelton, two Nigerian curators – Joseph Eboime and Emanuel Erinze – and the Caribbean artist Kathryn Chan. 16 The projects specifically extend the concern highlighted in this paper, to raise 'new voices and visibilities in the museum.' This concern is incorporated into the text displayed in the African Worlds gallery. 17 The cards are posted in a box and selected by museum staff for display to prevent racist or other prejudiced views appearing in the museum space. 18 The education department were given responsibility for planning a new 'hands on – minds on' gallery in the new building, where new technologies and changing display panels will eventually form a strong feature, to facilitate visitors' personal meaning-making and empower them to engage in a dialogue with objects and each other. 19 The Inspiration Africa! team-leaders are multiracial and include: myself as project partner from the museum, Tony Minion as project co-ordinator from the Arts Company 'Cloth of Gold', Jaqui Callis as ICT specialist, Sola Oyulele as a writer/director, Andrew Ward as a writer/rap poet, Ayo Thomas as a musician and Kevin Mathieson as the project evaluator.

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1.3 The Story of Immigration and Settlement: Designing Museums Capable of Reflecting a Diversity of Voices

Fiona Davison

Over 92 languages are spoken in Hackney, making it one of the most culturally diverse areas in Europe. Local history has to take on a different outlook in a place like this. Very few residents have long-standing family connections with the area and families can have their roots thousands of miles away. A conventional local history approach that concentrated on charting growth and change in the locality would risk alienating a large slice of our potential audience. It would also fail to do justice to what is unique about the area, its cosmopolitan character.

So when we were engaged in the long planning process for a new museum for Hackney, we knew we would have to create a local museum with a difference. We decided to explore the area's history by concentrating on its long-standing tradition of attracting newcomers. Throughout its history the area's growth has been driven by the arrival of newcomers, whether that was settlers from the surrounding countryside or immigrants from abroad. By looking at the history of immigration and settlement, we could show that everyone shared a story of movement and migration.

This approach also had the advantage of putting the present experience in historical context. Immigration is shown to be an integral part of the area's history since the first Saxon settlers arrived, rather than being a post-1950s phenomenon. It also means that cultural diversity is not treated as an 'add-on'.

Very often with urban histories, it is easy to fall into the trap of concentrating on the contrast between idyllic pre-urban scenes, captured in the type of picturesque topographical prints and photographs with which most museums are crammed to the rafters, and present day urban life. Even though that urban life will be described with vague, up-beat terms like 'vibrant' and 'multicultural', the underlying mood often seems to be one of decline and loss. There is rarely a serious investigation in local museums or histories of what has been gained by the shift to a more outward-looking, cosmopolitan society, nor is there much of a recognition of the long-standing nature of the story of migration and exchange. People belonging to ethnic minorities are often sidelined to the case at the end of the display 'Our

Left: Photo of the interior of Hackney Museum, with signage in foreground, 2006 © Ben Walker

Many Stories

Hackney has one of the richest mixes of people and cultures in Britain today. We collect things that relate to the history of all the people who have ever lived here.

Borough Today' with a hotchpotch of 'representative' multicultural material.

We then had to tackle the question, 'How do we tell this story?' It was clear from the outset that the most important thing was identifying the 'we' that was going to do the telling. A conventional, archive-based local history approach would simply not be enough. The story of immigration and settlement was always going to involve looking at issues that were emotive, controversial and above all, personal. The only way that we could hope to do justice to the subject was to involve people with first-hand experience.

Oral history was obviously going to be an essential element of the story and Hackney Museum has had a lot of experience in working with local communities to record their experiences. In the course of the preparation for the new displays, we decided to extend that process by commissioning people from the relevant communities to record interviews rather than museum staff. For instance, a Jewish radio producer, Allan Dein, was asked to record the memories of Jewish people who used to live in the borough in the 1920s and 30s. Allan worked within a brief to devise his own questions, select his own interviewees, record the interviews and, where possible, collect associated material. The resulting archive was an excellent resource, both for the permanent display and as a touring exhibition in the run up to re-opening. Allan was able to make a much better range of contacts than we would have been able to, and I am convinced that the quality of the material he was able to collect was much higher than anything museum staff would have been able to obtain on their own.

In addition to commissioning interviews, we decided to 'contract out' the process of collecting for the new displays. The choice of objects is one of the key decisions in determining the final character of a museum display and we wanted to ensure real community involvement in this process. We therefore set up a series of Collecting Panels. These were small groups of volunteers from a number of different communities. They were given a budget to acquire objects for the museum that would reflect their cultures and histories. The first group we set up was the Vietnamese collecting panel. In retrospect, it is clear that we gave this group too vague a brief, simply asking them to collect items for the museum that reflected their community. Not surprisingly, the group, when asked to be representative of a whole community as if that were a monolithic block of people with identical backgrounds and cultural identities, fell back on a predictable set of cultural symbols. They collected traditional costumes, religious artefacts and items relating to well-known festivals. Although these items have proved useful for education and display, they did not really capture the experiences of Vietnamese families in Hackney.

Our dissatisfaction with the way we had handled that panel led us to refine our brief for the next group. The West African Collecting Panel were asked to collect items that they had played with as children. By focussing on personal memories, we hoped to side-step the expectation that people should try to define and encompass a whole community in the items they selected. The objects acquired by this group were much more personal, including a catapult, a drum and a home-made go-kart. The last collecting panel we ran in the run up

to the new museum was a Turkish Collecting Panel, made up of English language students. They were asked to collect items which made them feel homesick for the life they had left behind in Turkey. This very specific and highly personal brief was by far the most successful of the panels in terms of the quality of information that was recorded alongside the acquisition of the objects. The participants were not asked to be 'representative' of anything other than themselves. They were not treated as spokespeople for a whole community. The whole process was a very valuable one for both museum staff and participants. We had handed over to the collecting panels parts of our budget and real responsibility for a key element of the museum's work. In return, the museum had gained a range of artefacts and associated information that added greatly to the displays as well as generating invaluable community links for the future.

We then decided to extend this collecting activity to collect 'created artefacts'. In other words, we wanted to commission the creation of artefacts in the form of artworks that would embody the experience of settling in a new place. We decided to work with schoolchildren because Hackney has a comparatively young population and a high percentage of local schoolchildren have direct experience of immigration.

The project called Suitcase Sculptures, was devised and run by Claire Adler, our Community Education Officer. The primary aim was to enable children from Shacklewell School to find out why their families lived in Hackney. They would then illustrate their stories by creating a portable sculpture that had to be small enough to fit into a suitcase.

The project involved a high commitment of staff time and resources, both on the part of the museum and the school. We decided that the project would succeed only if the children were given time to get to know Claire and May Ayres (the artist with whom we worked) and to develop the confidence to speak about what could be sensitive issues. The children did a large amount of preparatory work through studying books that encouraged them to think in abstract terms about the reasons that people move home, doing geography work around journeys and studying museum objects that related to their countries of origin. When the children came to record their own stories of why their families lived in Hackney, some of the stories were very traumatic. Mohammed had only recently arrived in Britain from Sierra Leone. The teacher worked very closely with him, as she was unsure of his circumstances. It emerged that he had travelled to England via four other countries, having seen atrocities in his own country. In the end, only one child in the class proved to have family roots in Hackney for more than two generations. The stories became a learning process for the whole class, including the teacher.

The sculptures that the children eventually produced were incredibly eloquent and powerful. Together with examples of the background work, they went on tour around the borough. It had always been the intention to include some of the sculptures in the finished museum, but the work was of such high quality and gave such an insight into a child's perspective on immigration that we chose to include ten sculptures in all. They are displayed

alongside conventional historic artefacts, together with a label written by the children. This project won a commendation in the 2001 Interpret Britain Awards.

In addition, we carried out more conventional community consultation in the form of focus groups who looked at our display proposals and draft display copy. However, it was the community projects described that I feel had the most profound effect on the way the displays eventually turned out. The museum attracted over ten thousand people in the first eight weeks, 49% of whom describe themselves as being from an ethnic minority.

Although the development of the museum did involve a great deal of community consultation and involvement, we still felt that it was important to acknowledge that the museum displays were just one way of looking at Hackney's past. The acknowledgement panel for the display thanks all the individuals and groups involved in the creation of the display but it also makes clear that the displays were written by named museum staff. By acknowledging our authorship in this way, we wanted to make clear that this is a subjective take on Hackney's past, something that can be discussed, challenged and changed. To this end, we have included an area in the museum called 'Platform' where work by individuals and groups offering a different perspective on Hackney's history can be showcased.

The process of preparing this permanent display has left us convinced that we need to do more work in developing new ways of transferring real decision-making responsibility in terms of what is collected and how it is interpreted. Now that we have got over the excitement of opening the museum, we plan to do further work on developing the commissioning model in new ways and with new groups.

2

Moving Museums

A new and expanded awareness of a wider and different constituency has meant that museums themselves have had to review their own programmes and working methods. They have also, in the process, had to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of a major institution. On the one hand they have clout and status, but on the other they also have distance. What should the nature of their engagement with constituency organisations be, and how can they act as a patron and partner most healthily? Eithne Nightingale, Susan McCormack and Lauren Parker from the V&A describe different aspects of the Museum's Cultural Diversity programme, while Carol Tulloch reflects on the experience of being an outside Black curator working with the V&A. Raj Pal, of Sandwell Museums Service, recommends the development of lateral thinking in order to identify underlying themes that would be relevant across diverse society. Finally Susan Croft and Stephen Bourne reflect on the role of the Theatre Museum in retrieving and giving a rightful place to Black performers.

2.1 Cultural Diversity and the V&A

Eithne Nightingale

The Victoria and Albert Museum has been working for over ten years with the South Asian and Chinese communities, particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to the Asian collections in the Nehru Gallery of Indian Art and the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art. Projects such as *Shamiana: the Mughal Tent*, initially a community-based project initiated by Shireen Akbar, have gained both national and international recognition.

We have built on and developed this work over the last two to three years, particularly through the Lottery-funded work under the programme, Cultural Diversity and the V&A. This paper will look at how we have attempted to sustain audiences, particularly after the 1999 exhibition, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*. It will consider our intercultural and interfaith initiatives. It will detail work with communities under-represented among visitors to the V&A, and where there is no related collection or gallery (in particular, black British/ African Caribbean audiences), and it will touch on some of the complexities of relationships between collections and communities.

There are multiple barriers to access to the V&A. These are primarily physical, intellectual, cultural and attitudinal barriers. Physically, we inhabit a large imposing building. Intellectually, the V&A could be open to criticism for being mono-curatorial, mono-cultural and mono-lingual, though some work by the Contemporary Team, the Education Department and that in the recently-furnished British Galleries do invite diverse interpretations. Culturally, the very name 'Victoria and Albert' seems to signify 'Empire', raising questions about the provenance and origin of some of the artefacts.

There are no longer entrance fees, but the costs of food, transport, tickets for special exhibitions and items in the shop constitute a possible financial barrier. Lastly, there are possible attitudinal barriers, triggered by doubts that ask, 'Is this the place for me? Is my culture and experience mirrored here? Does the staffing reflect diversity? Is this a place my peers, friends, family, community can either visit or find employment?'

Some people overcome these barriers. The more privileged socio-economically social classes A, B and C1, are well represented, making up approximately 90% of visitor figures (as opposed to 48% of the total UK population). Although the actual numbers of C2, D and E visitors have increased since free entry, their proportion has not increased, at least not in the short term. Also the majority of V&A visitors come from the South East and abroad and not the wider regions.

Whilst the national figure of 7% ethnic minorities seems at first to compare favourably with the V&A's 6%, the museum's figure also covers tourists. The figures for

London residents, excluding tourists, are perhaps more indicative. These show that 10% of London visitors are from ethnic minorities, as opposed to 25% of London residents being from ethnic minorities. Of course, there are also differences between ethnic minorities. MORI polls for black British/ African Caribbean visitors in particular show minimal attendance.

However, this is not the whole story. According to visitor surveys, of the 119,000 who visited the temporary exhibition, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, approximately 60% were Sikh, with coach loads coming from gurdwaras (Sikh temples) and other organisations all over the country. Of these, over 70% were first-time visitors to the V&A, and over 40% were first-time visitors to any museum or gallery. This was widening participation on a massive scale and the V&A was transformed for the period of the exhibition.

How was this achieved? It was the outcome of already established relationships, particularly between the Indian and South East Asian Department and individuals and organisations within the Sikh community. They, and in turn, the Museum, responded to suggestions from the Sikh community to celebrate three hundred years of the formation of the khalsa (the brotherhood of Sikhs). The exhibition focussed on the story of Sikhs in 19th century Panjab through works of art, with a major focus on the first Sikh maharaja, Ranjit Singh. The Sikh community advised curators on the content, display of religious material and any related sensitivities that might offend members of the community. They were involved in outreach, marketing, providing artists for the education programme and for running a volunteer-run Sikh help desk throughout the exhibition. This latter initiative was the idea of a particularly dynamic group of young Sikh students. All departments of the Museum became involved in some way or other. Welcoming so many first-time visitors became a cross-museum responsibility.

There were reservations about the exhibition; one of them related to the emphasis on art rather than religion. 'The Sikh exhibition was good, but we thought that a lot more to do with Sikhism, our Gods and paintings of our gurus etc., could have been on show.'

Informed by this feedback we embarked on an interfaith, intercultural project where different faith communities were invited to link sacred objects in the museum with sacred spaces in their own communities through the medium of photography.

We worked with a number of different organisations and institutions. These comprised the Swaminarayan temple in Neasden, where many of its deities and much of its architecture are also reflected in the V&A's Nehru gallery of Indian Art; the Gravesend and Dartford Muslim Association Centre where the children from the madrassah were given disposable cameras to take pictures of sacred spaces within their homes or their environments; and a Jewish youth group. Other groups involved were the Institute of Jainology, Middlesex; Northbrook Church of England School and Bibleway Tabernacle in Lewisham; Sikh students and, in particular, the Fellowship of Activists To Embrace Humanity (FATEH) and a Sikh Intercultural Awareness Project (Kent Social Services); the Western Buddhist Order based in Bethnal Green and a secular group from North London.

Overleaf: Photo taken by Terry Davis as part of the V&A's *Stepping Stones* project, 2002
© Terry Davis

An exhibition of eighty-two panels juxtaposing images of V&A objects alongside photographs taken by the different faith groups of sacred objects in their own communities was displayed at the V&A in Autumn 2000.

This exhibition has subsequently toured the UK, being displayed at such different venues as HM Prison, Brixton; Guru Nanak Sikh Temple, Luton; Young Jains Conference, Edgware; Stephen Lawrence Gallery, Greenwich University; Professional Development Centre, Finchley; Methodist Church in New Maldon; West London Synagogue and Friends Meeting House in Central London. Gallery trails based on the different faiths have also been developed and are to be launched during an intercultural Festival of Light at the V&A in November 2003.

Is this focus on faith the role of a national museum of art and design? It is a complex and sensitive area – the objects in the V&A had been chosen for their artistic value, but this does not divest them of their cultural and religious value to communities. One quote from a student on the Language and Literacy project illustrates this: 'Some of us did not like the coffins and some of us did not like the naked people. Roon [a fellow student] thought the Egyptian mummy should not be on show because it is very special for Islamic religion.'

The Language and Literacy programme is targeted at students in courses for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). These may be newly-arrived refugees or people who have been settled in this country for many years. When ESOL tutors from colleges, local boroughs and refugee or community centres book in a group, they are sent a pack of pre- and post-visit materials. The visit includes a tour of selected parts of the museum in accessible English, led by trained ESOL tutors. There are worksheets for level 1 and level 2 students based on seven galleries, including the Islamic gallery and the Nehru gallery. These galleries are the most popular because they resonate with the backgrounds of many of the students. The programme now attracts an average of two to three visits a week and, at high points, up to six to eight groups a week. The fact that the tour is delivered by trained ESOL tutors has been key to its success. This factor was picked out by Waltham Forest's Community and Learning Skills Council: 'I was very impressed indeed with your guided tour of the Museum for ESOL students. Seldom have I encountered an "outsider" who understood so well what our students' interests and abilities are.'

There are other initiatives such as at the Museum of Childhood in London's Bethnal Green. Here we are working with Bengali, Somali, Vietnamese, black British/African Caribbean, Turkish, Jewish, Traveller and white East End communities within the context of the new Community Strategy, capturing oral histories and memorabilia that reflect different experiences of childhood. These tangible and intangible heritages were incorporated into the newly designed World in the East End gallery.

There is a need to review some of the assumed relationships between specific collections and specific communities. Are the British Galleries or the temporary exhibition on tiaras of equal or greater interest to South Asian visitors than the Nehru gallery of Indian Art?



Below: Chinese New Year celebrations at the V&A, 2004, photographed by Maja Kardum, © V&A



How common are the interests between different generations or linguistic, cultural groups within the South Asian communities?

The Chinese programme at the V&A has a strong community base, and the V&A hosts many events for the Chinese community including chess competitions and dance performances by children from Chinese Saturday schools. There is no obvious engagement with collections in such events although children and helpers are encouraged to access the galleries when they are in the museum.

A feasibility study on work with travellers identified some superb photographs by Josef Koudelka of travellers in Eastern Europe. These formed the basis of a project with the Stepping Stones project working with young travellers in three boroughs. All three groups, including Irish Travellers and Romanies, visited the Print Room and then worked with photographers documenting their lives, inspired by the work of Koudelka. This has become a mobile display which has been exhibited at London Irish Centre and during the Brighton Festival.

The black British/African Caribbean community figured very low on the Mori visitors survey. At the same time, there was a common assumption that the V&A contained few or no collections that were relevant to the African diaspora. One of the central aims of the Cultural Diversity and the V&A programme was to explore how to work with a community where there was no specific collection or gallery. We developed a three-pronged approach.

Firstly, two focus groups were held during Black History Month 2001 when we consulted on how the museum could be more inclusive of the black British/African Caribbean community. A subsequent focus group was held with black British artists. Secondly, we carried out an audit of collections, identifying over 3000 objects of relevance to the African diaspora.

Lastly, we held events directly targeted at the black British/African Caribbean community. There have been several major initiatives celebrating diverse artistic and cultural traditions of carnival: Carnival in Motion in September 2001 and 2002, Carnival in Close Up in September 2000 and Carnival for All in September 2002. All drew on the skills of the many organisations that contribute to annual carnival events.

Another major initiative, the Day of Record, Black British Hairstyles and Nail Art in May 2001, is covered in detail elsewhere in this publication (see page 66). Lastly, there was the Paul Robeson Sing! exhibition at the London's Theatre Museum (see page 78) from October 2001 to September 2002.

This short paper has highlighted a number of initiatives each on different scales, ranging from the major temporary exhibition, The Arts of the Sikh Kingdom, to the small community-based initiative involving three groups of Romanian and traveller children. All the programmes outlined in this paper have been successful in introducing the V&A and its collections to new audiences. Some initiatives have supported communities in preserving or exploring heritage on their own terms and in developing capacity and skills within

communities. Some have highlighted or given enhanced cultural authority to diverse aspects of hidden heritage arts and culture. The V&A has certainly been enriched through such diverse interpretations, the new links established between objects and people's contemporary lives or different ways of classifying their collections.

Yet in some respects, these examples can be considered to be operating still at the margins of the V&A. Whilst successful in bringing in diverse audiences to targeted events, there is little evidence that there has been significant change in the overall visitor profile. There is a long way for the Museum to go in taking fully on board diversity issues across the range of its activities, although a commitment to these issues is embodied in the recent Access, Inclusion and Diversity policy of the V&A.

The lessons we can learn from such programmes in relation to working with and sustaining new audiences – whether that be in relation to marketing and outreach; education and interpretation; acquisition and classification of collections; the nature and effectiveness of partnership work – need to be considered in relation to the overall breadth of the Museum's responsibilities and activities. Such considerations and associated policies, practices and resources must move from the margins to the core. The museum is not a neutral space, but part of the dynamics of inequality and power relations – it therefore has a responsibility to spearhead change, taking a museum-wide approach to diversity.

2.2 Remapping the Museum: Initiatives for New Audiences

Susan McCormack and Lauren Parker

The Contemporary Programme of the Victoria and Albert Museum was launched in October 1999 with the aim of repositioning the museum in the minds of the public as a contemporary institution. The overall aims of the Programme are to:

- Present the designed world today
- Draw out the links between contemporary and historic production
- Work collaboratively with creative people and key communities
- Incorporate into the V&A new projects that promote access and inclusion
- Involve our visitors, making the V&A an interactive not a passive experience

The Programme covers the wide range of subjects represented within the V&A – fashion, design, art, craft, photography, graphics and architecture. We explore new methods of presentation to encourage interaction between contemporary art practice and the V&A's historic collections, and to encourage direct interaction between artists and visitors. Working without a gallery for the first years, the Programme developed a number of innovative events-based activities, interventions and one-off displays.

The Contemporary Programme is aimed at everyone interested in contemporary visual culture. However we specifically target:

- Young Londoners, including students, 16–34
- Art and design students
- People working in the creative industries
- People from culturally diverse backgrounds

Some projects have targeted a single particular audience, but in general the Programme strategy is to involve diverse audiences and communities through developing as much cross-cultural appeal as possible. Some of the new initiatives have been: Fashion in Motion, Friday Late View, Close Encounters of the Art Kind, Day of Record, Tattoo and Nails, Weaves and Naturals (see page 66). We aim to build longer-term relationships with particular new audiences to the V&A.

The Programme now has a dedicated space. The Contemporary gallery showcases a range of changing exhibitions and experimental projects, in addition to the existing programme of events and interventions. Cinema India: the Art of Bollywood was the

second exhibition to open in this gallery. The exhibition, and accompanying book, presented the V&A's collections of Indian film posters and other film ephemera which have been collected over the past twenty years, juxtaposing this work with the works of a number of contemporary artists who have taken inspiration from Bollywood films including Catherine Yass, Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Adam Bartos and Gulam Mohammed Sheikh. Over the years the V&A has built strong links with South Asian communities using the Nehru gallery as a basis for a sustained education programme. One of the aims of Cinema India was to develop this existing audience and encourage younger British Asians to visit the V&A. With the inclusion of contemporary artists we hoped to encourage the contemporary art and design audience who would not automatically come to see a display of historic film posters. Related events during the course of the exhibition, such as a Shhh!! Friday Late View with contemporary music and dance, helped build broad appeal across fashion, music and film.

One initiative provided a particularly interesting case study in the way in which it involved the visitor/audience. In 2001 the V&A collaborated with the Serpentine Gallery in London to present Give & Take, one exhibition on two sites. Working with curator Lisa Corrin, the work of fifteen contemporary artists was shown in the V&A while Hans Haacke created an installation of V&A objects called Mixed Messages at the Serpentine. Corrin had experience of previous similar projects. Most relevant to the present topic is the installation Mining the Museum, an exhibition she curated in 1992, in which artist Fred Wilson re-presented the permanent collections of the Maryland Historical Society.

The aim of our exhibition was to juxtapose contemporary and historic works at the V&A in a way that would challenge visitors' assumptions about concepts within the visual arts, such as Marc Quinn's challenge to the definition of beauty or Wim Delvoye and Liza Lou's challenge to the distinction frequently made between art and craft. Viewers were encouraged to become collaborators or partners in considering these questions, to look at them and make unexpected discoveries rather than being passive receivers of information. Most importantly, Give & Take revealed that the answers to such questions have always been less cut-and-dried than museums have usually led us to believe.

Even though there was supporting didactic material, the idea was that these questions would be raised first and foremost through the creation of visual dialogues between contemporary art and the V&A's historic collections. Give & Take showed not only how the past can inform the present but also how the present can cast new light on the past. The two sites of the exhibition revealed the contrast between the 'white cube' contemporary gallery and value-laden spaces of the V&A, and how works of art change when viewed in these different spaces.

One particularly pertinent commission for Give & Take was a work by the artist, Ken Aptekar, entitled Q&A. V&A Ken Aptekar produces community-based art; his work is curated with the aid of focus groups where he encourages viewers to 'talk-back' to the works of art. Aptekar's method during this project was to choose a number of paintings in the V&A

Overleaf: *Mary and Margaret Gainsborough*
by Thomas Gainsborough, around 1758, © V&A

collections, some by major artists such as Gainsborough and Courbet and others by lesser-known artists. The paintings were chosen loosely around subjects that reflected in some way a foreigner's view of stereotypes of Englishness.

The selected paintings were taken off display and laid out in a room, leaning against the walls, so that they were all in a sense de-mystified and given equal treatment. Aptekar then set to work with a number of focus groups, chosen to represent the diverse demography of Britain. The artist worked with the following groups: a Language and Literacy adult group; Stepping Stones, an organisation working with people with learning difficulties; the Pepperpot Caribbean pensioners group; a Spanish pensioner Group; people with red hair; and students. During the sessions, the artist asked a series of questions designed to encourage each member of the group to respond personally to the work of art. He explained that the artist's view is only one view, but that everyone can have a view on the meaning of a painting.

The groups' responses were recorded and the artist created an installation comprising a number of mixed-media pieces on the basis of their responses. The pieces featured excerpts of responses etched onto glass panels that were overlaid onto the surfaces of painted panels produced by Aptekar and then displayed in the European Paintings gallery. The panels also contained a mixture of fragments appropriated from the original V&A paintings used during the sessions, and these were also displayed as part of the installation. Thus the artist created a three-way narrative between the original artist, the viewer and Aptekar himself. The artist questions how a work of art gets its meaning and suggests that this meaning includes not only the original intention of the artist but also the experience that an individual viewer brings to the painting.

During the focus group there were some very moving and illuminating moments. One participant in the group with learning disabilities became very agitated when trying to describe what might have been written in the letter floating in the lake in Danube's painting, Disappointed Love. After ten minutes or so, he suddenly spoke out and said, 'I know now what it says. I've read the letter!'

Another poignant response, to Gainsborough's painting of his two daughters, is worth quoting. The painting had at some earlier stage been cut in two and sold to different collectors. It was later reunited into one canvas. In the painting, one of the young girls has her hand placed on her sister's head, grasping the hair above her forehead in an ambiguous gesture. Aptekar had asked the groups what they thought she was doing, and quotes Christina Shaw's reply:

'The hand holding the hair? It's a gentle, almost loving touch,' Christina Shaw tells me, 'an encouragement. You can see the suffering in the girl looking out, maybe from a long-term illness or from something much deeper than that. There's a hollow emptiness, like she's given up. The other one is trying to tell her that all is not lost, that she is loved.'



Christina doesn't know that the sisters suffered from mental illness as adults, nor that after Mary divorced following a brief marriage, she and Margaret lived together for the rest of their lives and are buried in a churchyard in Hanwell, in the same tomb.

The V&A's Contemporary Programme is especially keen to explore new means of engaging new audiences and diverse communities with the V&A, as the second part of *Give & Take*, the installation by Hans Haacke at the Serpentine Gallery, shows.

This requires us to go back to two assumptions that are commonly made about museums. The first is that museums are based upon a historical system of acquiring, classifying and displaying objects. This system reflects the voice of the curator and the ideological underpinnings of the museum, just as much as the objects reflect the meanings that visitors then put upon them. The second assumption is that museums have, in general, started a process of becoming much more self-reflexive about this.

Like many institutions founded in the 18th and 19th centuries, the V&A traditionally has not collected African and Caribbean art and design. And, alongside this, much of the collection is based around classifying objects by material rather than cultural relevance – metalwork, ceramics, textiles, for example.

And so, for the visitor who may be interested in representations and explorations of black culture, this apparent absence of relevant material culture, whether through the fact that material has not traditionally been collected or that relevant material has not been identified in a culturally specific way, can play a part in making the visitor feel that the V&A is not for them. Because of this historical situation, the Contemporary Team (alongside many other departments in the museum, particularly the Learning Department) has started to explore different ways of opening up the V&A and its collections.

A key aim of the Contemporary Programme is to make the V&A a relevant place to as diverse an audience as possible, to create new pathways into the collection, and to engage in dialogue with partners outside of the museum.

The installation, *Mixed Messages*, by the German artist, Hans Haacke, formed the other half of the *Give & Take* exhibition and showed ways that a museum can be self-reflexive in terms of its history and collections. Haacke was commissioned to create an installation at the Serpentine Gallery using the collections at the V&A. He spent a year undertaking research at the V&A and chose 150 objects from the collections that he then arranged and displayed at the Serpentine Gallery. The installation he created juxtaposed the objects in very different ways to those in which they had been traditionally displayed, and in doing so drew attention to the non-neutrality of traditional display methods, to the way in which they embody the ideology and culture of the museum curator and the institution itself. Haacke showed that these slowly accrued layers of interpretation can in the end obscure other voices and viewpoints.

Like Apteekar, Haacke drew out various themes that he felt were of relevance to the museum, such as the evolving way that Britishness is represented against stereotypical

representations of 'foreigners' and those colonised by the British Empire. His key interest was in showing that objects can be deceptive, that they are not always what they seem.

The Contemporary Team's involvement in different aspects of contemporary Black British Culture has extended to a series of projects. The first of these was a series of annual carnival events, working with the Learning Division at the V&A and with a wide range of carnival groups. The first Carnival in Motion day was launched in September 2000 and was accompanied by an exhibition, *Carnival in Close Up*.

From the V&A perspective, the project had two key aims. The first was to engage in a sustained dialogue with the carnival groups and local communities. From this first involvement in 2000, carnival projects have become an annual event at the museum, focusing on different elements of the carnival arts, from costume to steelpan to calypso and soca. The projects have included costume parades through the galleries, workshops, reminiscence sessions, musical performances and film screenings. The collaborative nature of these projects, both internally working closely with the Learning Division, and externally, have helped encourage new models of working within the museum.

The second aim was to encourage a broad level of involvement across community groups. A wide range of visitors came to carnival events at the V&A, from the very young to the very old. They came for a range of events, from family-based activities to talks and workshops based around the history of carnival to supporting and showing contemporary practice through new costumes, new music and new artists.

Carnival events have formed just one part of an ongoing series of events that engage with elements of black British culture. These have included the *Nails, Weaves and Natural's Day of Record*, events for Black History Month, including displays of contemporary black artists, a display by Susan Stockwell, and a trail around the museum and its collections that highlighted objects on display of cultural significance and formed part of the audit of the collections the V&A is currently undertaking.

In Autumn 2004, the Contemporary Space hosted *Black British Style*, a major exhibition exploring and celebrating black British fashion. A range of events took place leading up to and during the exhibition, as part of our ongoing commitment to sustaining audiences in new and innovative ways.

Working with the incredible diversity of the V&A, its collections and audiences, requires the expertise of not only museum staff – it would be impossible without other curators and artists, educators and the communities themselves. The V&A is committed to working with people who have specific expertise in different fields to ensure that such an amazing collection is of ongoing relevance.

2.3

SW7 to SW9: A Case Study of Two Exhibitions on Black Culture

Carol Tulloch

The curious title of this paper is my attempt to indicate the curatorial journey I took as curator at the Archives and Museum of Black Heritage (AMBH). For those of you who have not heard of AMBH, it was a project with an initial life span of eighteen months and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). With such a short time to prove itself, the quest was on to communicate AMBH's exhibitions policy visually. This was founded on the premise that AMBH wanted to create a space within museum culture to question, articulate and celebrate the history and culture of the African diaspora in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It was a further aim of the project to do some of this through collaborations with other organisations.

I do not intend to present concrete answers in it, but rather to put forward points of consideration for exploration and analysis in my current research, via two events with which I was involved. First was the collaborative project, Nails, Weaves and Naturals: Hairstyles and Nail Art of Black Britain. This Day of Record, an annual event on different themes regarding applied and decorative body arts, was jointly organised by myself and Shaun Cole of the Contemporary Team of the V&A Museum, SW7, on 7th May 2001. On 22nd October of the same year, I curated Tools of the Trade: Memories of Black British Hairdressing, in the gallery of the Black Cultural Archives, Brixton, SW9, also the home of the AMBH project.

The opportunity to reflect on these projects brought to the surface a series of key terms: collaboration, the agency of the curator, the notion of the 'black curator', the reconsideration of museum identities having such binary categorisations as 'white museums' and 'black museums'. Also upon reflection, I began to ask myself what it meant to be the curator of a new black project who happened to be black British, in a team where all the staff were black and predominantly female, working on a project based in a so-called black area of London, which intended to present exhibitions that focuses on black history and culture. What does cultural diversity and social inclusion mean for this institution? Where should I position myself 'vis-a-vis the identities of the group I was to represent?' (Greenberg, Ferguson, Nairne 1996:24).

The latter point is important. My experience over the last eighteen months had involved working with two different types of institution, the V&A and AMBH, and had

made me confront the issue of what 'white' and 'black' organisations want to achieve, what audience (in most cases, what new audience) they aim to attract, and how these aims can be achieved creatively. I had to appreciate the different needs and the different histories that had led to the public identities of these organisations in order to understand their approach to cultural diversity.

I suppose I had better own up that, yes, the title 'SW7 to SW9' was a provocative statement on the generalised identities of those two areas of London. SW7 is generally viewed as white, rich and safe, whilst SW9 is seen as black, poor and crime-ridden. The two areas really only have in common the fact that they are both situated in South West London. What I can confirm is that the collaborative venture between AMBH and the V&A did not accord with the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of 'collaboration', namely, 'co-operating traitorously with the enemy', but rather its other, more benign meaning: to 'work jointly, especially in a literary or artistic production'.

The incredibly successful collaboration between the V&A and AMBH was a dynamic force because both parties appreciated and respected each other's skills and knowledge. One had a long established international reputation as a museological force. The other was the new kid on the museum block with the primary agenda to champion all aspects of black history through exhibitions and education. Both combined to produce an event that changed in a day the interior landscape of the V&A and challenged the preconceptions of what a 'white organisation' can do for black history in the 21st century. I use the term 'white organisation' provocatively, as it is informed by the comments made by black people in response to the Day of Record and comments made during the event itself.

Historically, the reference to the V&A as a 'white organisation' comes from the standpoint of its history being steeped in colonialism, and described by Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn in their book, *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, as 'a formidable colonial institution, situated only yards from the sites of such imperial spectacles as the Great Exhibition of 1851, the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition, and the former Imperial Institute ... indicating the web of continuities between colonial past and post-colonial present.' (Barringer and Flynn 1998:1). As the Museum developed from the mid 1800s onwards, it became part of the British Imperialist machinery in expanding its range of objects, and to quote Tim Barringer again: 'The representations of the world which it offered were deeply embedded in the developing culture of Victorian imperialism ... The acquisition of objects from areas of the world in which Britain had colonial or proto-colonial political and military interests, and the ordering and displaying of them by a museum which was a department of the British state, formed ... a three-dimensional imperial archive. The procession of objects from peripheries to centre symbolically enacted the idea of London as the heart of empire.' (ibid 1998:11).

We know times have changed for the V&A. The museum's activities, particularly over the past couple of years, have represented a concerted effort to redress such lingering

Right: A Day of Record; Black British Hairstyles and Nail Art, 7 May 2001, photographed by Graham Brandon, © V&A

notions of its history and have started to embrace cultural diversity and social inclusion initiatives supported by such institutions as the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England. Such intentions led the V&A to change its focus, from one in which it had possessed objects from the so-called peripheries to one in which it helped to tell the stories of those peripheries and encouraged black people, specifically those of the African diaspora, to enter its galleries and interact with the museum. One example of this shift was the Day of Record event of May 2001.

This initiative began in the summer of 2000 when, due of my research on dress and the presentation of self within the African diaspora, I was invited by Shaun Cole and Susan McCormack, Senior Curator of the Contemporary Team, to work with them on their next Day of Record event on black hair. When I joined the AMBH project in the following year, I was able to bring the event with me since the project fitted perfectly into the initiatives that drove AMBH.

Its remit was to record and discuss the hundreds of hairstyles and nail art, worn by black men, women and children of the African diaspora, thereby highlighting the wearer and the cultural impact of their grooming. The event also wanted to include the hairstyles worn by whites that were inspired by black hairstyles. Thus the target groups were primarily black men and women of all ages and from all backgrounds; hairdressers and students; and other cultural groups throughout Britain.

The collaboration was built on the premise that AMBH would provide specialist knowledge on the subject of black hair and nails, and the V&A the expertise in the organising such an event. Its core team was made up of Shaun Cole, Susan McCormack (Contemporary Team); Eithne Nightingale, Rhondda Garraway (Education Department); Helen Beeckmans (press officer) and myself. Shaun and I were primary co-ordinators and all decisions made about the development and marketing of the event were discussed with both of us. A strong working relationship developed between us all in which institutional sensibilities challenged assumptions about what could be provided and gained from hosting an event around black culture.

The result was an incredible day. There was an unprecedented presence of black people within the museum. Over 1,200 people attended the event, 95% of whom were black and many of whom were new to the V&A. Criticism of the event aired the fear that the V&A was attempting to appropriate black culture, whilst others decried the use of white speakers on black issues. Nonetheless, the majority saw the day as a positive first step. They wanted to see more events like this within the V&A, with the possibility of it lasting more than one day and even being televised.

The second exhibition, Tools of the Trade: Memories of Black British Hairdressing, aimed to extend some of the issues raised in the Day of Record. While the Day of Record had essentially highlighted the wearer of black hairstyles and nail art and the cultural impact of their grooming, Tools of the Trade wanted to bring to the fore the black hairstylist. It based



itself on the oral histories of practitioners, providing a chronology of the field's development from the late 1940s to 2001. In addition, each contributor was asked which hairdressing tool they viewed as the essential element of their art. These objects were displayed alongside their owners' testimonies, enunciating the importance of the tools to their creativity and to expand the chronology.

With its focus on objects and memories associated with the individual black hairdresser, *Tools of the Trade* was an illustration of what Judy Attfield defined as, 'the mediation process between people and the physical world at different stages of their biographies'. *Tools of the Trade* was, then, like the *Day of Record* – a living exhibition. Its underlying premise was that material culture, with its focus on objects and forms and the employment of them in the fabric of cultural worlds, can add to the expansion of black British heritage. It consequently alludes to the development of another aspect of British hairdressing and its history.

My experience in co-organising the *Day of Record* within the V&A made me reflect quite deeply. Watching visitors' reactions to the various events and to the grand spaces of the V&A, appreciating their desire for knowledge and hearing their comments on the day, all made me realise what a strong organisational infrastructure and the support of a wide variety of colleagues can achieve. It also showed me that as a mediator of black history connected to a black organisation, I had a responsibility to communicate to black people in particular, and to work out what to show to a group that is notably hungry for their history.

Tools of the Trade was a much more solitary exercise, but I felt that the architecture of the gallery space in Brixton heightened this responsibility further. Two of its sides were visible from outside by passers-by. The glass material gave tremendous light and a jewelled quality to the exhibition, but it also gave it a public presence that talked directly to people. The essential tools chosen by five of the contributors to the exhibition were placed on plinths with captions visible and legible from the road.

It was planned as a straightforward event, a celebration of the art of hairdressing rather than a dissertation on the politics of black hair. This had already been discussed during the lectures around the *Day of Record* and the exhibition, *Grooming and Identity: Hairstyles of the African Diaspora*.

Taken together, the *Day of Record* and *Tools of the Trade* events achieved the end result hoped for by Maria Carmen Ramirez:

From this point of view, curators must be able to recognise that what holds an individual or group together cannot be reduced to a particular set of traits or to a specific essence embodied in art. Neither can it be apprehended in a single exhibition or collection ... Therefore, it is to the diversity of each group's experience, in its contradictory stances and multiplicity of approaches towards art, that curators

must turn their attention. This approach should ultimately pave the way for new exhibition models and a more authentic renewal of curatorial practices.' (Greenberg, Ferguson, Nairne 1996:34)

Finally, let us return to the key terms mentioned earlier. The collaboration between a black museum and a white museum can result in what Clémentine Deliss refers to as cross-connections and cross-cultural interaction. If successful, 'a new critical environment' is formulated and the 'setting-in-place of a sphere of interaction where the work and the curatorial strategy are intimately bound together, triggering off new technologies about making and thinking about ... art' (ibid 1996:285–286), specifically black history and material culture.

What was achieved in following the *Day of Record* event at the V&A with *Tools of the Trade* at the Brixton, home of AMBH, was an 'attempt to represent the social, ethnic or political complexities of (black people in Britain) without reducing their subjects to essentialist stereotypes' and a contribution to the question of where I, and other similarly placed curators, 'should position (ourselves) vis-à-vis the identities of the groups they claim to represent' (ibid 1996:23–4). As curator of AMBH, where I was called upon to interpret black histories rather than to care for a collection or to actively collect, my role could fit Ramirez's description of a 'cultural mediator', whose premise 'is to uncover and explicate how the [cultural] practices of traditionally subordinate or peripheral groups or emerging communities convey notions of identity ... By selecting, framing, and interpreting peripheral art in exhibitions and exhibition catalogues, for instance, art curators can claim to be shaping a more democratic space where specific cultural groups can recognise themselves.' (ibid 1996:22–3). The two events outlined here, and most notably the 'black' and 'white' organisations involved in their production, are just two examples of the nation-wide development of black heritage in Britain that create democratic spaces where institutions and the public can meet and spark further dialogue.

2.4 Connections and Disconnections: Relationships Between Collections and Communities

Raj Pal

Watching Simon Schama's recent programme on British history, something struck me about the changing nature of how we see the past. Whoever said that the past is dead could not be more wrong. There are always new ways of seeing the past and will always continue to be. The episode in question, 'Victoria's Sisters', looked at the contributions of prominent Victorian women in shaping society. There, among all the great women of the Victorian era, was a certain Mary Seacole. Schama gave us a moving and affectionate portrait of this 19th century nurse from Jamaica who comforted wounded and dying British soldiers on the Crimean battlefield. What was amazing about all this was that Schama spent very little time on that other slightly better-known nurse of the time, a certain Florence Nightingale.

Today most of us have heard about Seacole, but less than a generation ago very few outside the ranks of radical and black historians knew anything about this remarkable woman who was referred to by soldiers as 'Mother'. So how is it that she is suddenly the centrepiece of a prime time TV history programme? The answer lies in the remarkable demographic and cultural changes that our society has undergone in the last few decades. Along with these changes have come new ways of interpreting the past or, as John Berger would say, new 'ways of seeing'.

The Mary Seacole narrative serves twin purposes. It demonstrates that in this relatively dynamic and changing society there are voices that were previously unheard or ignored, now demanding that their perceptions, experiences, histories and cultures be acknowledged. With that goes another notion, that Mary Seacole's story enriches our understanding of the past by opening another layer. It makes an important aspect of a past – historically seen as quintessentially white British and 'uncontaminated' by 'multicultural PC rubbish', as conservative critics often have it – of immediate relevance to a generation of non-white Brits who are often alienated from traditional historical narratives. It then has the potential to promote a newer kind of integrated identity and essential commonality: a theme I shall return to later.

Mary Seacole provides a useful context for the main issues, the relationship between collections and communities. A museum's relationship with the communities it seeks to serve is intrinsically linked to its collections policy. Not all museums have local collecting



policies, but for the majority, I maintain that contemporary collecting should reflect changes in the society for whom we seek to have relevance. It is not as straightforward as it seems, a number of obstacles need to be overcome. By the very nature of our profession, we focus on collecting. The issue of rationalisation and disposal of collections is one that we have been reluctant to address for too long. In Sandwell, for all the noble intentions that we have of making our collecting reflect contemporary society, we cannot do much because we do not actually have any spare storage space.

Assuming though that storage exists, the more fundamental issues around collecting can be addressed. Without being unduly provocative, it is nevertheless a fact that most collecting policies are biased towards the white middle classes by sheer dint of the fact that they have historically been the most significant group to visit museums or offer objects to their collections. Sandwell's ethnographical collection is a case in point. Named after its donor, the Helen Caddick Collection is the epitome of a collection that came about as a result of the travels throughout the world of an upper-class Victorian lady. This, by the way, is a woman who famously writes in her diary of the loneliness of being a traveller in China when she was in fact accompanied by eighty helpers! This oversight does not of course detract from the merits of the collection, but this style of giving only reinforces the somewhat conservative nature of the profession and forms a cycle that needs to be broken.

Starting a collections policy that begins to reflect local communities is actually not too difficult. The paperwork is fairly straightforward but it is the spirit and meaning of the thing that is really important. Any such initiative has to have as its starting point a thorough understanding of local communities and their dynamics. This does not mean merely a statistical breakdown. Communities which may on the surface seem quite homogeneous often have as much diversity within them as society outside does. It is only by understanding this that curators and museum professionals will develop the confidence needed to develop the crucial communication and dialogue with communities. A few years ago, I took colleagues to a Gurdwara in Birmingham and discovered that none of them had ever been to one.

It is too often tempting to devise a collecting policy purely from paper research. When museums do make an effort to be proactive, as in the case of Bradford's Cartwright Hall with its fine Intercultural Galleries, the results can be rewarding. And the principle applies to more than just ethnic minority communities. Traditional white working class communities equally feel that their lives and interests are still significantly under-represented and therefore undervalued in the national consciousness. Local communities came forward, for instance, with the idea of an exhibition about the Staffordshire bull terrier, since the breed had originated locally in the Cradley Heath area. The animal might not be to the taste of curators from a particular class background but it is a potent symbol of dwindling working class identity. The resulting touring exhibition proved to be exceptionally popular, so much so that there is now a demand for a permanent display. The opening night of the exhibition was a real eye-opener, when the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and the local MP and

councillors all jostled with each other to speak.

Even if you collect on the basis of knowledge and understanding, that is still not the whole story. It is easy to fulfil one's obligation by collecting and storing, but it is what you do with the collected material that is the biggest challenge. Interpretation is the hardest bit because curators, so used to being the supreme arbiters, often find it difficult to think outside the box or involve others in the interpretation process, although there are signs that this is changing as we start to address wider issues of access and accountability. But the danger of this attempt at access is the emergence of displays and interpretations once described by one sharp-tongued critic as the 'samosas, saris and steel band syndrome'. "Local authority museums, worthy but dull." Discuss', said an essay question I came across in my museums studies course at Leicester University.

The biggest challenge after collecting is to interpret the material in fresh and imaginative ways that engage and challenge visitors instead of coming across, as far too many displays do, as simply a duty to record ethnic minority communities. Fresh interpretations will open out displays to wider audiences. The key is to stop seeing newly-collected objects in isolation, on a stand-alone basis. Without too big a leap of imagination, synergies can be pointed out with collections that have been seen as eurocentric and that had not, at first glance, seemed to connect with the new items. *The Last of England* by Ford Madox Brown in the City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery is an illustration of what can be done. On one level, it is the epitome of a very traditional 19th-century European painting with little relevance to the city's current diversity. But I have believed for a long time that it offers a prime example of the way in which the appeal of collections can be imaginatively widened. It depicts, in wonderful detail, the contradictory emotions that migrants go through as they detach themselves from the familiar in search of a better life. *The Last of England* could, if interpreted creatively, speak loudly to audiences in a city primarily made up of migrants of all backgrounds and their descendants. The story of how the Sultanganj Buddha came to end up in Birmingham may not fit quite into the theme of collecting, but it has much to say about Britain's colonial past and changing attitudes to non-European arts and artefacts in British museums.

The whole matter of collecting requires some imagination and thought. Why are we collecting? While it is important that we fill gaps in our existing collections so as to reflect contemporary society, this may lead to a compartmentalised approach that thinks only of fulfilling certain community quotas. But as is clear from the example of *The Last of England*, the notion of collecting on themes that point up commonalities attracts me. I have been mulling over the idea of pilgrimages for a long time, for instance, the notion of involving a number of local people and collecting around that common theme. It is a rich one, with both religious and secular connotations. A well thought-out collection project could appeal to those who undertake pilgrimages to Mecca, Amritsar or Hardwar, to Rome, Lourdes, Jerusalem or Canterbury, or for that matter to Graceland.

Oak House, a beautiful Tudor yeoman farmer's house, is one of Sandwell Museum Service's main attractions. It is here that we deliver our main educational programme on Tudor living history. Since the major contact between England and India took place during the era of the Tudors and their contemporaries, the Mughals, a schools resource box that explores the impact on both civilisations of this 16th and 17th century connection represents an ideal opportunity to collect. This project could help to establish a collections policy that gives a broad spectrum of Sandwell's population a sense of ownership and also promote an overall sense of connection where none had previously seemed to exist. For me it would go some way towards satisfying my key motivation for being in the profession: I want us to be doing something that makes people leave our buildings feeling that they have experienced something that has altered their perception of the world around them. Hopefully they will say, 'I didn't know that'.

These narratives and interpretations have all departed from tradition and subsequently not only reached wider audiences but also given new generations a sense of connection with the continuity of British history. This is absolutely vital if we are to avoid the sort of alienation that we have recently witnessed in some newer communities and give an answer to the perennial question: 'What has this got to do with me? It's not my history.'

2.5 Producing Black and Asian Performance at the Theatre Museum: A User's Guide

Susan Croft and Stephen Bourne

Susan Croft As Curator of Contemporary Performance at the Theatre Museum my brief is a wide one but I've been particularly engaged in ensuring that the Museum collects material representing the rise of what is sometimes called 'alternative theatre', which emerged in 1968. This definition includes experimental theatre and live art, physical and visual theatre, feminist and other political theatre, gay and lesbian, community theatre and plays and black theatre, amongst others. All the usual suspects.

The Museum's collecting policy has usually, in fact if not in intent, tended to favour the mainstream West End. My role, by contrast, is one concerned with the margins and the culturally marginalised, primarily focused on the contemporary (late 20th century onwards) and on the history of more marginalised work, making visible earlier work that has often been forgotten. The role also involves creating exhibitions and displays reflecting that work: one example being the Black Theatre History Trail that the Museum originally created for Black History Month in 1999 and that involved a number of different displays including one on Ira Aldridge the great 19th-century black Shakespearean actor, black performers in Hogarth's prints, minstrel puppets in the Victorian Tiller Clowes theatre, carnival exhibits by Mahogany Carnival Arts and material on Ballets Negres, the first black dance company established in Britain (in 1946). Another display presented items from the archive of Unity: the Workers' Theatre, focusing on the involvement in its work of black performers like Paul Robeson, Errol Hill, Robert Adams, Ida Shepley and its creation of plays dealing with issues of relevance to black people like Geoffrey Trease's 'Colony' and Mulk Raj Anand's 'India Speaks'. You don't need to spend very long researching a display or trail, event or exhibition or educational project before you discover that there is an enormous amount of material already in the Theatre Museum collections that relates to black theatre history. The difficulty is locating it.

The Theatre Museum holds both Core Collections and Special Collections. Among the latter the relevance to black theatre history is sometimes easier to identify, such as in the Temba and Black Theatre Collection. Temba was one of the first black theatre companies to emerge in the 1970s. Other relevant Special Collections include archives relating to Alfred Fagon, Black Mime Theatre and Tricycle Theatre. The Museum's Core Collections consist of a

huge assembly of programmes, playbills and reviews, filed under the name of the theatre and cross-referenced by title of play. There is also an enormous collection of photographs filed under artist or title of play, biographical files arranged by individual name, stage designs catalogued under designer and title of production. I could go on: books, videos, prompt-scripts, paintings, costumes, props, theatres and set models, puppets, ceramics, prints etc. There were no resources or personnel to catalogue any of this material digitally until 1997 when the Museum first acquired a digital library catalogue and part-time cataloguer – the library catalogue is now available online as part of the National Art Library catalogue and it is possible to, say, tag all black theatre related plays with a keyword note identifying them. All earlier material remains catalogued on index cards and so finding material generally depends on a lot of different manual finding aids and staff expertise. So if a researcher is looking for a specific topic like black performance, they need to know what to look for and where to look. The problem is to know that, say, Loudon Sainthill's 1958 set design for the Royal Court Theatre for 'Flesh to a Tiger' is for a play set in the Caribbean by a Jamaican-born writer, Barry Reckord, who had by then settled in Britain. (He, incidentally, was interviewed for Blackgrounds, our oral history project, run jointly with Talawa Theatre Company.) In order to know that this design relates to black British theatre history, you have to have contextual knowledge. The challenge is to then find ways of making this knowledge and material available, especially to the non-expert, the student, the junior researcher. It also needs to be available to other curators, not just in creating special exhibitions but in informing the choice of objects and content in any exhibition, small display or educational project.

Incidentally, such problems of locating material don't disappear and finding even newly acquired and digitally catalogued material remains a matter of both resources and awareness. The Arts Council of Great Britain archive acquired by the V&A and Theatre Museum several years ago came with a 'dowry' to allow basic cataloguing but the resources available were not enough to allow keyword cataloguing. Yet again, to know where there is material on black culture or black performance, and of course there is lots of it, you have to have prior knowledge of the artist or company to know where to look.

The Theatre Museum has begun addressing these problems in several ways. One is through the resource discovery project, funded by the Research Libraries Support Programme, Backstage (www.backstage.ac.uk) that provides online Collections Level Descriptions of Special and Core Collections. We have also contributed Collections Level Descriptions to the CASBAH project (www.casbah.ac.uk) that provides a gateway to discover materials on Black British and Caribbean history in Britain. We've created a Black Performance digital timeline among the resources that form the online web resource New Opportunities Fund, supported by the PeoplePlay UK (www.peopleplayuk.org). This includes scans of and information on some of the objects in our collection and an introduction to the subject.

These projects give outline descriptions of the scope of collections or draw on materials we already know about. The problem is in the material we have and don't know

Below: Peggy Ashcroft and Paul Robeson star in *Othello*, the Savoy, 1930, © V&A



about, the hundreds of shows for which there are programmes and playbills and reviews and photos that relate to black theatre but which are buried in the collections. This is where real spade work is needed to begin to discover what is there.

So we started a small project to begin to make more of this work accessible: it's a beginning that must lead to much more detailed and extensive future work. But when we wanted to create a user's guide on researching black and Asian Performance at the Theatre Museum, we needed the expertise of someone who knew what to look for: who were the key individuals, the key years, the significant theatres, and what were the key productions? And so we brought in Stephen Bourne...

Stephen Bourne As a child in the 1960s I grew up in a racially-mixed, working-class community on a council estate in Peckham. On the other side of London lived Aunt Esther, a black woman born here before the First World War. Clearly, growing up in a racially-mixed community, in a bi-racial family, gave me insights that most white children in Britain did not get.

Early on, I was motivated to write my first book, *Aunt Esther's Story*, with my black British aunt. This gave me insights into the lives of black working-class Britons between the wars. I had already found some information about the black middle-classes of that period, such as Marcus Garvey, C L R James and Dr Harold Moody. Aunt Esther was a working-class woman who spoke eloquently, and movingly, about her life experiences. From Aunt Esther, I learned about the importance of oral history testament, and this has become a major feature of all my books, including *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television*.

When I grew up, there weren't that many books around about black British history. There was next to nothing about the involvement of black people in British film, television, radio and theatre. I found plenty of material about African American actors, entertainers and jazz musicians. This made my work all the more important, and difficult.

When I was approached by the Theatre Museum to loan material from my private collection to their Let Paul Robeson Sing! exhibitions that opened in October 2001, I asked about the possibility of cataloguing their black theatre collection. In collaboration with Susan Croft, I developed a project for which we received a small amount of funding. This has enabled me to access the Theatre Museum archive, and to begin to list theatre productions that have involved black actors, dramatists, musicians and so on.

The project concentrates on the formative years of black theatre in Britain, from the earliest times to 1975. The list includes West End plays, revues, musicals, as well as any material relating to non-West End productions (such as the Arts Council's 1950 tour of 'Othello' with black actor, Gordon Heath). Susan and I are planning to publish a small catalogue of the findings for users of the Theatre Museum, but the project needs more funding to widen its scope, and for more information to be discovered.

Postscript Since the Connections/Disconnections conference, the Theatre Museum was able to find a small amount of additional funding which enabled it to employ Dr Alda Terracciano on a similar basis to Stephen Bourne. With Stephen concentrating on the period from 1825 to 1975 and Alda on the period from 1976 to 2000, two lists were compiled noting around a hundred and fifty of the most significant theatre productions featuring black and Asian people. In the first period, these often feature key individual performers, from Ira Aldridge to Alaknanda Samarth, but later they are increasingly all-black productions and companies and the work of black writers and directors.

These lists were then extensively annotated to give further information on the productions and a 'mini-audit' of material held by the Museum, from reviews and playbills to stage designs. They form the core of the publication 'Black and Asian Performance at the Theatre Museum: a Users Guide', published on the web in 2001 and in updated hard-copy form in October 2003. They are supplemented by material giving an overview of the Museum's collections and relevant holdings within the National Video Archive of Performance and Audio-Video Collection, resources available elsewhere in the UK (including web resources), access details and an updated version of Susan Croft's bibliography of published black British and Asian plays. Together the contents provide an essential set of starting-points for students, teachers and researchers to explore further this vital and still hugely under-explored area of our culture. It is hoped the project will be the beginning of a much more detailed piece of research exploring in more detail material on these and many more productions, and extending the work into other areas of performance.

3

Communicating Voices

History has always been selective, choosing to record the acts and individuals that value judgements of both the recording agent and dominant thought of the time endowed with significance. Connections/Disconnections provided a series of case studies and presentations that demonstrated the strength of bringing hidden histories to light. Deborah Willis' international keynote established the longevity of Black photography while Dinah Winch revealed the unexpected collections hidden within the V&A itself. The session also pointed out the need to discover new strategies and techniques in order to retrieve and present lost or ignored stories. Amandeep Singh Madra shows the potency of community links, while Julie Cornish asks if the world wide web really can provide the kind of counter to exclusion that has sometimes been claimed.

3.1 Reflections on the History of Black Photographers

Deborah Willis

While there is a growing awareness of works by contemporary black photographers, there has been very little historical research or critical analysis of the images produced by 19th- and early 20th-century African-Americans. The reality is that African-Americans have produced photographs since 1840, since the invention of the daguerreotype.

The first photographs made by black photographers made significant contributions to American history and culture. What makes them particularly significant is that the inhumane institution of slavery existed in the 1840s and would survive another twenty-five years. In spite of pervasive racial discrimination throughout the United States, hundreds of free people of colour established themselves as professional artists and daguerreotypists. As they began to record the essence of their communities mainly through portraiture, a few photographers gained national recognition. Throughout the North, South, and the developing West, these photographers celebrated the ethnic diversity of American families, the common man and woman, free and enslaved Africans, newly arrived immigrants, and slave owners and their descendants depicted in photographers' studios, private homes, and public classrooms.

Concerned about how black people were portrayed in a world of rank racist imagery, black photographers were especially sensitive to negative depictions of black Americans during the mid 1800s. One need only peruse the visual representations of black people commonly produced on postcards and sheet music to realise that the exaggerated features and demeaning situations depicted there left an enduring negative impact, one that has endured to this day.

Many black photographers contradicted these depictions by making representative portraits of their subjects. Most of their African-American clients wanted to celebrate their achievements and establish a counter-image that conveyed a sense of self and self-worth. Obliging, many black photographers recorded the significant events in their lives – both celebratory as well as unsettling. Most of these photographers focused their cameras on the free black communities throughout the country, predominantly in the North.

The photographs made of black subjects in the 19th century often preserved the appearance and notability of the sitters. Many names and personal histories have been lost, an unsurprising fact considering the numerous studios proliferating through the country. Fortunately, some of their photographs still survive. Because of technical and commercial

limitations, most 19th-century black photographers succeeded at portraiture or studio photography, rather than at creating news, industrial, or landscape images.

As with most portraiture, the photographs made in the 19th century were not intended for publication or public presentation. The African-American clients merely wanted to have their likenesses preserved for future generations. Thus it is only now, more than 100 years later, that these photographs represent a vital part of African-American history. One recognises the trappings of artifice but is inspired nonetheless by the enthusiasm and positive spirit inherent in these portraits.

Once technology made it viable to do portraiture, African-American photographers produced idealised glimpses of family members set in romanticised or dramatic poses. They sought to integrate elements of romanticism and classicism into their work, echoing the work of painters in the 18th century. Early photographers created genre scenes and landscapes, and they made elaborate backdrops for studio portraits. Most of these early photographs were taken to commemorate a special occasion in the sitter's life, such as birth, confirmation, graduation, courtship, marriage, military service, anniversaries, death, or some social or political success.

Between 1900 and 1930, African-American photographers flourished in businesses established in larger cities. Generally, these photographers were the ambassadors to African-American communities. Through their studio doors came rural, urban, and foreign-born blacks, including members of the working class, such as labourers and domestic workers, as well as artists and educators. Photography did not discriminate, and its low cost made the portrait available to many.

3.2 Sustaining Sikh Audiences

Amandeep Singh Madra

This short paper discusses the efforts by the Education Department and the South Asian Department to sustain the Sikh audiences that visited the V&A, many for the first time, following the success of the Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms exhibition in 1999. One particular initiative, a series of Sikh heritage lectures, is discussed in some detail and how this initiative allowed one voluntary group to explain, develop and build a self-sustaining, regional programme.

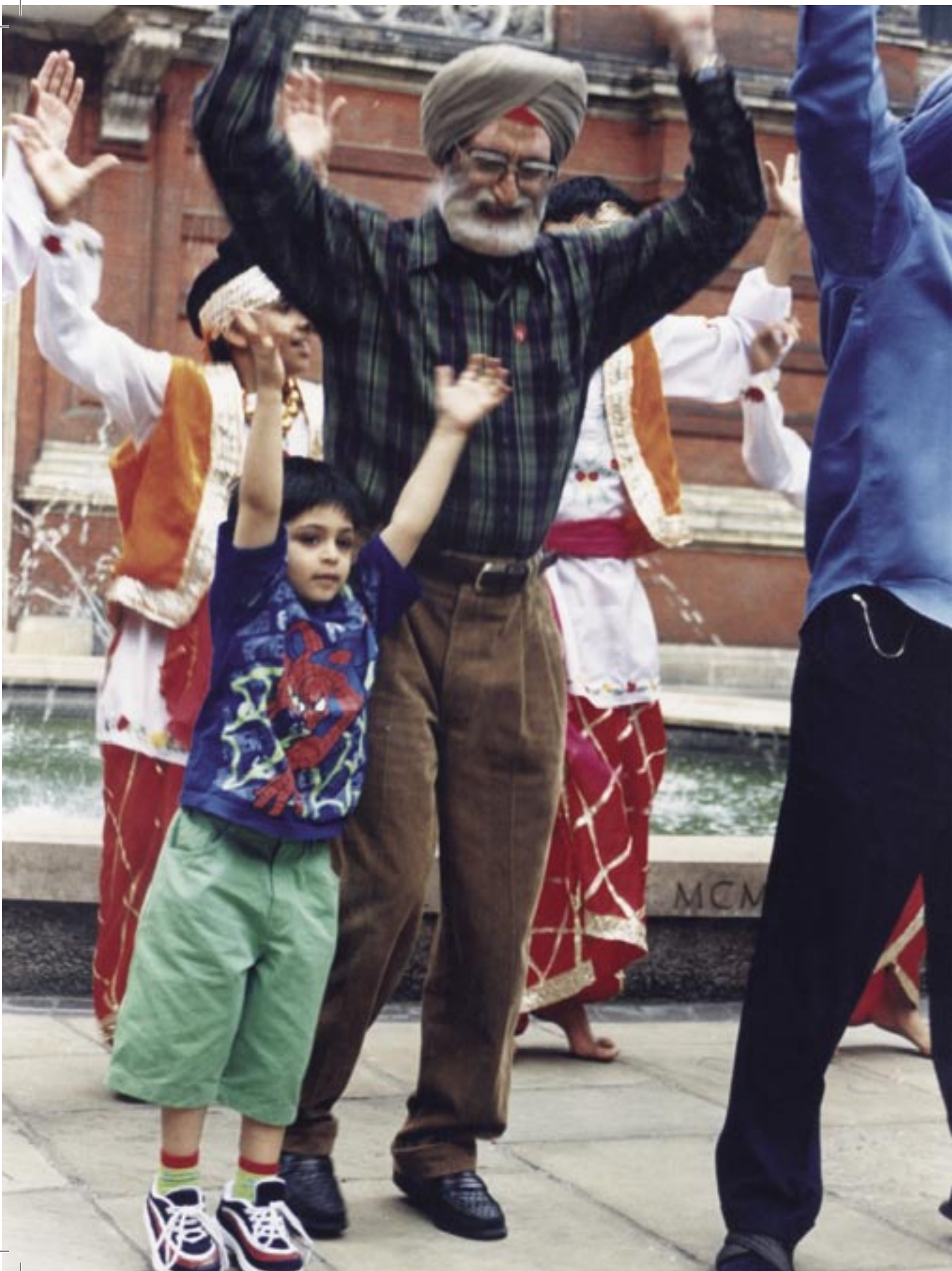
Before proceeding I will briefly mention some of the intangible by-products from the exhibition that also fall into the category of sustaining audiences but are certainly harder to distinguish from statistics and demographics alone.

When the exhibition closed in London on 25 July 1999 it had been, for many people, the centrepiece of a year of celebrations that surrounded an important anniversary in the Sikh calendar, namely the 300th anniversary of the formation of the Khalsa, the baptised fraternity of the Sikhs and the birth of the very visible Sikh identity. Given the exhibition's quite central role in that year's festivities, it gave rise to and inspired a large number of activities that carry on today.

The exhibition moved to Toronto and then San Francisco where a whole new international audience was stirred. Subsequently the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) played host to a Sikh Heritage Gala and the Asian Arts Museum in San Francisco opened a permanent gallery of Sikh Arts. There is little doubt that these would not have happened had it not been for the work carried out in London. In New Delhi, an exhibition titled 'Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art' described by the curator and art critic, B.N. Goswamy, as 'inspired by the Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms' ran in 2000, accompanied by a sumptuous catalogue. More recently, the Smithsonian Institution has modelled the early phases of its Sikh Heritage Programme on the V&A's exhibitions and aims to produce an exhibition and accompanying book. The major sponsors were reportedly so inspired by the exhibition that they urged the Smithsonian to support this concept.

Neither should the impact outside the museum world be overlooked. Local groups, again encouraged by the V&A's example and legitimised by their links with the Museum, have also been able to build upon the exhibition. Prime amongst these has been the Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust who credits the V&A, and the network established when working in partnership with the museum, for the success of a number of events since July 1999. These include an annual lecture at the Imperial War Museum, events with the V&A that include the Millennium Mela in 2000, and an ongoing partnership with English Heritage which has led to the 'Jawans to Generals' exhibition at the Wellington Arch in

Left: Bhangra dance workshop in the V&A garden, a part of the Education Programme, Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms, 1999 © Eithne Nightingale



London during 2002.

A number of smaller organisations have displayed objects and put on temporary exhibitions spurred on directly or indirectly by the V&A example. One in Harrow in 1999 was also called 'Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms'; there was an exhibition of arms and armour in Watford, and dozens of others. These events were not simply confined to a short time after the exhibition. In July 2002, for example, Sikh students in Luton staged a weekend event, called 'Who are the Sikhs?', centred around the Sacred Spaces exhibition materials created at the V&A (see page 50).

Increased knowledge about the collections has also had the effect of creating a new dialogue that has helped to overcome once seemingly difficult problems. A good example is the current silence over ownership issues that dogged Sikh heritage debates inside and outside the community for years. The open nature of the exhibition and the follow-up events have created an environment where community groups and national institutions can indeed live out the spirit and letter of shared heritage and shared ownership.

Finally, a number of Sikh heritage resources have been created as a result of the exhibition. Each has developed and sustained audiences that would otherwise not have been introduced to Sikh arts or heritage. Through the encouragement, contacts and support of the curatorial staff at the V&A, the book *Warrior Saints*, by Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh, (London: IB Tauris, 1999) was published. A second book by the same authors *Siques, Tigers of Thieves: Eyewitness Accounts of the Sikhs (1606-1809)*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming) is very much a product of the first. Another resource has been the establishment of a Sikh heritage desk at the V&A that serves as a contact point for Sikh heritage issues. Finally, a series of heritage assets in the form of lectures that are the subject of the rest of this paper has been established.

When the V&A's Learning Division started to talk about establishing a lecture series and asked for thoughts from the Sikh community, a small number of people were thoroughly enthused by the concept. The idea was in many ways a perfect opportunity to showcase Sikh heritage work by a number of practitioners, from the V&A and outside, to an audience that was interested enough to take personal time out to attend.

The result was a series of seven lectures running from April to October 2001. Seven speakers, from travel writers to museum curators to accountants, spoke on subjects as diverse as Punjabi manuscripts and sword blades. An early consultation meeting focussed on the importance of conservation. So in July 2001 a one day seminar was run, entitled *Preserving Sikh Heritage*, that coincided with the visit of an Indian conservation architect and was hosted by the V&A. This even received a mention in the House of Commons during a debate on the Punjab as well attracting a great deal of community press and attention. As a result, the team that put this seminar together organised itself into a brand-new heritage group to tackle issues of heritage education and conservation within the community called the United Kingdom Punjab Heritage Association (UKPHA).

By the end of October 2001, the lectures had attracted over three hundred individual visitors, most attending between two and three lectures. The vast majority, around 80%, were young men; only 17% were women and 4% were over 55. This was a real contrast to most Wednesday evening events at the V&A that attract a quite different profile. And it is a profile that leaves UKPHA with a quite different set of issues.

Spurred on by this, UKPHA organised a second series of lectures. These ran throughout 2002, and were designed to tackle heritage themes outside the usual preoccupation of the courtly arts in the mid 19th century. To that end, topics such as contemporary Gurdwara (temple) design, Sikh women and art, Sikh martial arts and the very origins of the art and faith in illuminated manuscripts were subjects that found a new audience during the second series of the London talks. This series proved as successful as the first.

However the Learning Division of the V&A did not have the funding for a further series. The fledgling UKPHA therefore decided to take the challenging route of bidding for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. This application was successful and facilitated a further series of talks that critically took the lectures to four regional venues, as well as building capacity within the organisation itself. The regional series was designed to work with local communities through the organisation's personal networks. Where UKPHA could provide a series of local community contacts and venues, the V&A was able to furnish the organisers with regional museum and council contacts that could facilitate the practical arrangements of the lecture series. Together UKPHA and its four regional partners designed a series of almost forty events that ran at Hounslow, Ilford, Bradford and Leicester.

For UKPHA and for the hundreds of people, from London's East End to England's North West, that have enjoyed these lectures over two years, this partnership has become a rich experience and a wonderful opportunity. In addition to being landmark events in the heart of these four sizeable Sikh communities, they also established a stepping stone to other events, ideas, dialogue and opportunities. And all from an exhibition that closed its doors in July 1999.

3.3 Hidden Histories: Black History in the V&A

Dinah Winch

The V&A has not historically been associated with black and African culture. There have been some temporary displays of the work of black artists and the Streetstyle exhibition in 1994 included black British and Caribbean dress. More recently a number of events have been developed as part of the Museum's Contemporary and Access programmes, but the V&A has been reticent in representing and exploring black culture in its major exhibitions and permanent displays. In order to rise to the challenge to re-image and re-imagine Britain, we need to look at long-term transformations of the stories that are told in permanent museum displays, as well as temporary exhibitions and events. In order to do this, we need to develop collecting policies that reflect the contemporary and historical cultural diversity of our society, and re-examine and re-interpret our historical collections. It is often said that museums like the V&A do not have enough objects relating to black heritage and history to be able to do this. This is because (the argument goes) the V&A is an art & design museum, as opposed to a social history museum; unlike the British Museum or the Horniman Museum, it does not have galleries of African art or ethnography. I regularly encountered these arguments while working at the V&A, yet I continued to stumble across objects that undermined them, an abolitionist purse decorated with images of female slaves, numerous representations of the four continents on textiles, prints and in ceramics, beautiful representations of the three kings, a 19th-century gown from Liberia, a pot by the Kenyan-born Magdalene Odundo. Not only does the V&A have African objects in its collection but, moreover, the histories of Britain, Europe, Africa and the Caribbean have been historically linked for so long, on so many levels (primarily through the structures of trade and empire) that aspects of these histories are naturally reflected in the collection even of a museum such as this. A museum does not have to have ethnographic African collections to engage with the history of Africa and people of African descent.

My research in the collections, along with my colleague Mary Guyatt, led to a small temporary display in the museum for Black History Month in 2001 that explored the representation of black people in European decorative art. A parallel display, curated by Rosie Miles of the Prints and Drawings Department, focused on works by 20th-century black artists. These displays were not only of interest to visitors but were critical in engaging museum staff with the issues, giving insight into the possibilities for exploring black history and culture within a collection of European decorative and fine art. Individual objects that

Below: Drinking vessel, earthenware,
Siddig El 'Nigoumi, 1980 © Siddig El 'Nigoumi



had once been seen as anomalous in the collections now took on new significance as part of a larger cross-disciplinary group. In February 2002 I established a project within the Research Department of the V&A to audit the Museum's collections for objects that related to Africa, the history of the African diaspora and the representation of Africa and the people of African descent within European art and design. This ensured that the collections were at the heart of the V&A's cultural diversity strategy.

In this paper, I focus on three broad groupings of objects identified by that project: African objects, works by contemporary black British artists and European objects.

The vast majority of African objects in the V&A are from North Africa and many, far from being hidden away in the stores, can be seen in the Islamic Gallery, due to reopen in 2006. The V&A was created in the mid 19th century when the art of Sub-Saharan African was misunderstood and often contemptuously dismissed by Europeans, compared to the highly regarded arts of the Islamic World and Asia. In keeping with this attitude, the V&A actively collected objects from East and South Asian and from Islamic North Africa, but not objects from south of a vaguely-drawn line in the Saharan sand. Interestingly the Museum's founder, Henry Cole, did consider collecting objects from Sub-Saharan Africa but nothing came of it. Despite this, every department in the Museum has some Sub-Saharan African objects, acquired for a variety of reasons. Objects such as two beautiful men's robes from 19th-century Gambia and Liberia were acquired as part of a collection of world dress, demonstrating different designs, skills and techniques, from around the world. In the 20th century, textiles made for export were an important element of British textile manufacture and the Museum's collection of British textiles includes a group of fabrics from the Manchester-based firm, Logan, Muckett and Co., made in the late 1940s for export to West Africa.

A pot made by the great Nigerian potter, Ladi Kwali, was acquired because of her links with the British studio potter, Michael Cardew, who spent more than 20 years working in Ghana and Nigeria. Ladi Kwali became well-known in Britain as a result of her touring in the 1960s with other potters from Nigeria; her work combined techniques, forms and decoration from both British studio and traditional Nigerian pottery. The collection also includes two pots by the Sudanese potter, Siddig El 'Nigoumi, who settled permanently in Britain in 1967 and a pot by the Kenyan-born potter, Magdalene Odundo, who is based in Britain. The artistic language of both of these makers is underpinned by the use of traditional African pottery techniques of hand building and burnishing the surfaces of their pots.

There are also examples of sculpture, jewellery, painting, arms and armour from Africa in the collections.

In contrast to works by African artists and makers, works by contemporary black British artists are much better represented in the V&A's collections as a result of a more concerted collecting policy by curators in the departments of photographs, prints and drawings. Artists represented include Lubaina Himid, Maud Sulter, Ingrid Pollard and Chris Ofili.

Right: *Frances Williams, the Negro Scholar of Jamaica*, unknown painter, English, around 1745, © V&A

Perhaps the most challenging issue to explore when approaching a collection such as the V&A's is the series of interconnections between African, Caribbean and European history. There are, of course, all sorts of connections and hidden histories. Materials, for example, are rarely remarked on, yet gold, dyes, woods and ivory imported from Africa and the Caribbean were among the most valued commodities in the decorative arts. Europeans were trading in gold and ivory in West Africa before they became engaged in the slave trade. New commodities such as tobacco (imported primarily from the West Indies) led to the creation of new types of objects such as pipes and the decorative paraphernalia associated with tobacco, like snuff boxes and graters, were part of the furniture of the English gentleman from the 17th century onwards. Other sorts of objects reflect the history of trade, imperialism and slavery more visually: for instance, ceramic bowls commemorating imperial battles and other Victorian imperial commemoratives, from pottery to wallpaper.

One area that has received some comment has been the material culture of abolitionism. The V&A has some significant objects such as Wedgwood's abolitionist plaque and a silk purse, made in 1828, that was acquired with some anti-slavery pamphlets, reflecting the importance of women in the abolitionist movement in Britain.

More than 1,500 European or American representations of black people have been identified in the V&A as part of this project, in all media: paintings, drawings, ceramics, jewellery, sculpture, tapestry, textiles and furniture. The oldest are representations of the adoration of the magi made in Italy, Germany, The Netherlands and Britain from the later Middle Ages onwards: there are paintings, fragments of stained glass, illuminated manuscripts and jewellery featuring the story. This was one of the most popular subjects for European religious art in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, when it was common to depict the three kings as a European, an Asian and an African. Many of these images employed conventions and stereotypes and the black kings are not particularly realistic.

These objects reflect the imaginative power of the idea of Africa in Europe but they also reflect the real historical presence of black people. The incredible diversity in the representations of the black king in Europe is in part a result of the fact that there were images of black people in circulation that were drawn from life. There were black people in most European cities and royal courts from the 13th century onwards, and not all of them were slaves. In the 13th century, an African known as Johannes Maurus was in charge of the household of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and he later went on to be a regional governor.

This black presence increased dramatically as the slave trade expanded and British prints, paintings and drawings from the 17th, 18th and 19th century and photographs from the 19th and 20th century reflect this. These include images of well-known people such as Francis Barber, Jonathan Strong and Prince Alamayu of Abyssinia. Perhaps more significantly black sailors, traders, musicians, servants, prostitutes, beggars and passers-by crop up in countless images of domestic life and street scenes, not only in prints and paintings but on ceramics and textiles.



The V&A owns one unique and particularly important image of a black man, the portrait of *Francis Williams, The Negro Scholar of Jamaica*.

The story of this work illuminates key issues around the creation of history and the practice of collecting in British museums. Williams was a free Jamaican poet whose history has until recently been seen through the eyes of Edward Long, the notoriously racist historian of colonial Jamaica. Long contemptuously claimed that Williams had been educated in Britain by the Duke of Montagu (patron of Ignatius Sancho). This story was not questioned until recently when new research revealed it to be almost wholly inaccurate. To give just one example, Williams, a successful businessman with no need of British patronage, was more likely to have reached Britain under his own steam. It has been suggested that this portrait is a caricature of Williams because the painter has shown him with a large head and legs so thin that his stockings are wrinkled. However, Williams, alert to the emerging stereotype of the black male, may have wanted to be shown in this manner to emphasise his intellectual rather than physical stature.

The interesting hidden history of this painting is the fact that it was acquired by the V&A in 1928 because of 'its peculiar value from the point of view of the furniture and other details shown in it, quite apart from the striking story connected with the individual whom it represents'. For much of the next 60 years, it hung in the English furniture galleries alongside furniture made of imported woods. Finally, it has been hung in a more appropriate context, in a display about 18th-century portraiture in the British Galleries, alongside an ivory relief of Matthew Raper, carved by David Le Marchand. Raper, a precocious young scholar, is shown in a virtually identical pose to Williams, as a scholar in his study. The portrait of Williams is given a layer of contemporary interpretation in the gallery with an audio programme featuring the poet, Benjamin Zephaniah, giving his personal response to the picture.

In conclusion, these objects raise many questions about how and why they are here in the collections of the V&A. The story of the portrait of the Francis Williams is the most obvious case in point, but most of the objects in the V&A that relate to black history were acquired because of their significance in other areas. It is only now that they are being reinterpreted through the prism of black history. The fact that a museum that has not actively collected objects that relate to black history nevertheless has a collection of well over a thousand objects that have specific cultural relevance to the history of the African diaspora only serves to demonstrate that our histories are inextricably interconnected in the most complex ways. Part of the purpose of the black history project at the V&A was to enable discussions to take place: to show that the profile of black history could be raised in this institution (and other British museums) as part of a long-term project to create displays and resources that more accurately reflect the cultural diversity of both the histories that the V&A can tell and the audiences that the V&A serves.

3.4 A Separate Sense

Rajiv Anand

A Separate Sense was an innovative video installation project that took place in the summer of 2000 in Batley, West Yorkshire. It targeted an audience of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who were facing social exclusion, and looked particularly at the issues of identity and cultural heritage as they affected young South Asian women in North Kirklees.

The idea came from Kirklees Community History Service. They brought in local film-maker, Navdeep S Kandola, and three young South Asian women from the surrounding areas of Batley, Dewsbury and Heckmondwike. Together the group worked at Bagshaw Museum, Batley, from June to September 2000, selecting everyday objects from the South Asian collection such as cooling utensils, water carriers, jewellery boxes and other decorative objects.

These objects triggered a stream of creative thought, and sparked off a myriad of cultural issues that the young women realised had affected their lives. The fundamental question, 'Who am I?', became central as they started to ask in-depth questions regarding how they fitted into their local and wider communities. The harsh realities of exclusion and racism raised their ugly heads throughout the project.

The group documented their experiences through video and oral histories, along with working journals and various related cultural memorabilia. They videoed the areas where they lived, and also the places that they would regularly visit, such as local shops and markets. In the process, they were given substantial technical training by the film-maker, and curatorial guidance on object handling and interpretation by the Community History Service.

The final outcome was a video and highly popular exhibition in Bagshaw Museum that recorded the realisations and enhanced sense of self that these young women had discovered through the project. It proved so popular that the dates had to be extended for a further six months before the exhibition and video went on a regional tour to the other museums in the district, such as Tolson Museum in Huddersfield and Dewsbury Town Hall as well as several local schools in Kirklees.

In retrospect, the project was successful at differing levels. Not only did it address the issues of 'self' and identity, but it also addressed issues connected with cultural, intellectual and emotional access. The young people broke down various barriers by working in the museum. They learnt about themselves, their shifting cultures and the complexities of being accepted within a wider framework.

The project addressed the issues of access and learning: both its process and outcomes brought home that is that learning is impossible without access. A Separate Sense proved to be an exemplary study of good practice in combining access, development and expression.

The Shamiana Website: New Audiences and New Technology

3.5

Julie Cornish

Overview

Museums are being told increasingly that the key to wider dissemination of their work is the world wide web, as well as the way to create new communities of interest. Not enough research exists to allow us to examine the strengths and weaknesses of websites in this area and let us know whether this is a blanket truth that pertains in all situations and across all museums.

The V&A's Cultural Diversity Programme used the web as a staple of one of its community programmes, the Shamiana project. An evaluation was made to see how it addressed the central question: to what extent is the web a viable medium for engaging and sustaining communities?

It was hoped that the Shamiana website evaluation would help inform future V&A work. The results have highlighted the following key points:

- Material on the web can provide inspiration for new projects.
- Shamiana demonstrates that the web can be a successful way of celebrating people's work, giving participants pride in seeing their work online.
- Access to computers and confidence in using computers for certain sectors of the Asian community is a big barrier at present. This is not something the V&A can necessarily support on its own, but could partner with organisations which can (community colleges, ICT centres, etc).
- Local and global partnerships are important. Links to local organisation websites will help provide information on local resources for community groups. Networking with other large organisations who are raising awareness in issues relating to communities will help give the work a higher profile.
- The web cannot necessarily work alone in sustaining audiences.
- Careful thought needs to be given to the kind of online activities included in a site making sure that they are thoroughly tested beforehand. Quick and simple activities can be successful in engaging people who casually enter the site, whilst the results help keep the site alive by providing new content from the users. More involved activities need high maintenance and the users will probably require a lot of support either from the museum or partnering organisations e.g. for downloading art work onto the web.

Project history

Shamiana: The tent that covers the world

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/shamiana/>

Shamiana: The tent that covers the world is a website created to celebrate the Shamiana project. Shamiana: The Mughal Tent project was a V&A education initiative that united groups of Asian women and children in the creation of a unique collection of textile panels, inspired by South Asian collections at the V&A and other museums throughout the world. The textile panels showed an extraordinary freshness and beauty, combining influences from many cultures. The panels were brought together in an exhibition at the V&A in 1997. Over 500 women and children from the UK and nine other countries had been involved in this project. The site was launched in April 2001.

Website Objectives

- Bring back Asian audiences, particularly those previously involved in the Shamiana textile project
- Develop a better understanding of other cultures through the use of museum collections
- Encourage use of new technology, particularly for South Asian women and girls
- Sustain national and international links
- Provide an introduction to the Shamiana project
- Highlight traditional textile skills

Online activities

Two online activities were developed for the Shamiana site:

Create A Tent – a quick activity in which anyone can take part. It was hoped that it would encourage people to look through the artwork, choose their favourite panels and then place them in a tent template, adding a message of their choice.

Digital Artwork – an activity for groups who wish to gain inspiration from the site and museum collections, carry out their own digital artwork project following guidelines on the site, then submit their artwork to the site to be included in the gallery of artwork. A pilot project was carried out with two Asian girls' groups (one in Tipton and one in Tower Hamlets). Both groups visited the V&A, were shown how to use digital cameras and took photos in the Indian and Islamic galleries. They were then given tuition in Photoshop software to enable them to play with their images. Their digital artwork has been added to the website. Most of the girls were very positive about their experience with this project and wanted to go on to learn more about IT skills.

Shamiana website evaluation

The V&A web logs show that there has been an average of 810 visits per month to the Shamiana site since it was launched.

The main part of the evaluation was carried out as telephone interviews. 12 people were interviewed by phone. These included:

- 4 community workers
- 4 artists
- 3 museum professionals
- 1 school teacher

They were all in some way involved with the original Shamiana project. The results of this evaluation are as follows:

What did people most like about the site?

- Attractive to look at
- Easy to navigate
- The fact that people can see their own work online
- The reminder of what a wonderful project Shamiana was, keeping the spirit of Shamiana alive
- Pleased that the V&A is happy to mention other peoples work on the web

What did people not like about the site?

- Wanted to see updated information on the site about other related projects
- Problems accessing the site when showing a group their artwork, loss of interest
- Difficult to quickly find groups' artwork
- Difficult to download some of the pictures, rather long-winded
- Difficulty completing the Create a Tent activity, not very straight forward

How could the website be improved?

- Update the site with information on new related projects
- Exploit the web more by linking this site to other international sites which offer encouragement and support to women, e.g 'Respect' a site launched by the Prince's Trust, by looking at issues of respect and tolerance of other cultures and faiths led by Timebank, and other interfaith web networks
- Link with health websites: 'accessing your creativity has a positive affect on your health'
- Shamiana itself was a project bringing together people of many different faiths, showing there are no differences; the website could promote this
- Work with communities is organic and the website needs to be flexible to be able to add or change information
- Would prefer to be able to send or e-mail photos of new work to someone at the V&A rather than uploading the images themselves
- Good to know where the actual textile panels are now located so that people can go and see them if appropriate

Is this a good introduction to Shamiana?

- Yes! – 'keeping the spirit of Shamiana alive'

Has the site brought back audiences?

- Only a small number
- Access to computers is a big problem for the women
- Few women have the confidence to use a computer
- Some women are scared of computers and technology

What has been gained from looking at the site?

- Repeated comments on the importance of peoples' work being shown on web; giving these participants pride in knowing their work is on the web
- 'I think a sense again of actually being valued... The fact that people's work was valued and celebrated and the fact that that has been carrying on through the website'
- The site has been an inspiration for other projects (although the web as a medium was considered as only a starting point for a new project)
- Knowing that their work was going to be published on the V&A website, the group came together with that goal in mind, just like the original Shamiana exhibition (although very few would see the end result)
- Knowing their work was going to be part of an international online project was also incentive for completing a new project

What other support would help new projects?

- The existence of the website cannot teach you IT skills on its own. IT support for women, teach them IT skills and allow them to gain confidence in using a computer. This needs time and continued support (not something the V&A can directly support on its own)
- More information on resources local to groups (e.g. where people can get involved), therefore, need to network this site with other websites with local information
- A bulletin board on the site to allow a dialogue for user groups
- Would prefer a point of contact at the V&A so that staff added new material
- 'Visits from museum staff are great!'

Has the site encouraged people to use the Internet more?

- This site has not specifically encouraged the use of the Internet
- As a result of looking at the Shamiana site two people have said they have accessed more pages of the V&A website. 'I have gone to places on the V&A site that I wouldn't have gone to if I hadn't been looking for the Shamiana one'

Has the site highlighted traditional textile techniques?

- It was considered that people without any knowledge of traditional textile skills may benefit from this site
- The web is not considered the medium for learning about stitching, which necessarily has to be a practical exercise

Create a Tent activity

The following results are collated from the submissions (none of these questions were mandatory):

Ethnic background:

- 5 White
- 2 White – British
- 1 White – American
- 1 French Canadian
- 1 Scottish
- 2 Mixed
- 1 Indian
- 2 Pakistani

Gender:

- 4 Male
- 14 Female

Age group:

- 1 Under 18
- 0 19–24
- 8 25–34
- 3 35–44
- 5 45–54
- 0 55–64
- 0 Over 65

Sample of messages:

‘Golden Rain’

‘I enjoyed finding out about this project, especially now’

‘Through unity comes discussion. Through discussion comes knowledge. Through knowledge comes wisdom. Through wisdom comes understanding’

‘It’s a comfort to think that far away, women have followed the same steps, looked at the same images and hopefully felt the same kinship that I felt’

Digital Artwork activity

Five groups from the following locations have registered:

Hong Kong; Malaysia; Sheffield, UK; Wimborne, UK; Birmingham, UK

None of these groups have submitted artwork to the site to date. There has been no response from any of the groups as to whether they have completed artwork and not submitted it, or whether the site did not provide the right information.

3.6 Big Screen in Little China!

By Yeu-Lai Mo

The British Chinese Artists’ Association (BCAA) was a voluntary organisation set up in 1991 by a steering committee of artists. It represented artists of Chinese descent living and working in Britain, artists from all areas of art forms including fine arts, Chinese arts and crafts, film, fashion, design, photography, performance, drama and literature.

From 1999–2001, I carried out the Education in Schools and Community Outreach Project with Regional Arts Lottery funding. In this project, we worked with three inner-city Chinese communities across London. It was an ambitious project with three projects running alongside each other. The first, Remembering Treasures and Surprises, introduced drama and singing to an elderly group, improvisational drama to a youth group and dance for the women’s group at Bishop Ho-Ming Wah Centre in Central London. The second project, Blending Old and New, with the Camden Chinese Centre, introduced digital media and the internet and used calligraphy and storytelling techniques. For the third, we worked with Newham Chinese Association, looking at mixed media and various crafts for the women’s group and elders. Through our work with these communities we learned a great deal. There were many hurdles to get over, especially the attitudes and lack of knowledge about the arts. Often the elders thought ‘art’ was a luxury activity. Practical things like cooking or hairdressing were more important. These attitudes could have stemmed from Communist indoctrination in China where the arts were seen as bourgeois.

In February 2002, I was invited to curate a show for Chinese new year celebrations taking place in Trafalgar Square, called Big Screen in Little China. Past celebrations took place in Gerard Street with craft stalls, a funfair in Leicester Square, a main stage area with various performances such as Cantonese opera, dance, singing, theatre groups, and traditional lion-dancing parading in and out of Chinatown. The 2002 event in Trafalgar Square was larger in scale and an ideal opportunity to project a refreshing image of the Chinese community in London.

During my time at BCAA, I noticed that most opportunities for Chinese artists occurred during this time of the year. Galleries, community centres (both black and white organisations), turn their attention to Chinese artists and themes around Chinese New Year and as beggars can’t be choosers, one tries to use the platform positively.

The Steering Committee consisted of London Chinatown Association, BCAA and Yellow Earth Theatre Company. The committee agreed that the purpose of CNY should be ‘to promote Chinese culture, including its achievements other than stereotypical views of the catering trade and to encourage tourism for Chinatown’.

We also turned to a website called www.britishbornchinese.co.uk – a popular website among the youth and young Chinese professionals, to get feedback on what the celebrations should be about. Ideas included:

‘The event should have high media coverage’

‘To build bridges with the community’

‘To demystify the rituals of the Chinese New Year and ideas of the community to the general public’

‘To celebrate the Chinese in Britain as a part of British heritage’

For ‘Big Screen in Little China’, we approached Global Media Interface, a giant multimedia screen located in the heart of Leicester Square known as the GMI Screen. GMI were very happy to take part in the celebrations and were kind enough to donate their technical support to the project. Their screen is 6m wide and 11m high and runs all day and all night. Criteria for the work chosen was based on the fact the screen had no sound and an unusual long and thin shape. So artists’ work had to have strong visual elements to be able to communicate without a sound-track.

As a result, a partnership came about with GMI and twelve artists were chosen to exhibit in this space. They were Suki Chan, Lisa Cheung, Anthony Lam, Susan Pui San Lok, Kwong Lee, Yeu-Lai Mo, Pamela So, John Tran, Mayling To, Jen Wu, Lau Hoi Yee, JJ Xi and Cai Yuan. They exhibited video art, animation and photography. Their work is briefly described.

Suki Chan’s video entitled *Shadow Song* was inspired by oral histories and Chinese folk songs remembered by an elderly group in Manchester. The piece was spilt into three sections shown intermittently throughout the loop.

City Sleeper by Lisa Cheung was a result of a residency at Manchester Chinese Arts Centre in 2000. It was a short film about a girl working in a Chinese takeaway who created a fantasy world within the confines of the shop using dance and martial arts to create a romantic story around her customers.

Anthony Lam’s photographic stills called *Head Space* lit up the GMI screen with a series of close-up portraits from everyday life on the streets of Hong Kong.

Susan Pui San Lok contributed a site-specific video called *Mirror Ball Kit £29.95*, a conceptual piece focusing on the inside of a shop window selling lighting, and looking at the mundane and commercial aspects of shopping thus projected on the cinematic screen.

These hands are made for cooking, by Manchester-based artist Kwong Lee, looked at five people chosen to ‘make a Chinese meal’ in their own kitchens. The main focus was on hands and we saw cultural interpretations of each dish as well as the techniques and equipment used. It bore references to new fad TV cookery programmes.

Yeu Lai Mo’s piece, entitled *Service, Kissing and Licking*, dealt with irony and servitude, and a girl from behind the takeaway counter getting her own back on conventional ideas of ‘the customer is always right’.

Pamela So’s rare super 8 footage, called *Loch Lomond*, showed her family in the 1950’s

Overleaf: Food Jars, mixed media sculptures,
Yeu Lai Mo, 1998 © Yeu Lai Mo

dressed in their Sunday best having a picnic in a scenic beauty spot in Scotland. The women are dressed in cheong-sams with matching coats, looking elegant and out of place, eating sandwiches while trying not to get their lipstick smudged.

Our second photographer in the project was John Tran showing *Utamakura Series*. These were black and white photographs of derelict buildings taken in Japan and Hong Kong, juxtaposed with poetry work, previously shown at Pitshanger Gallery in West London earlier that year.

Mayling To contributed *Fight Sequence*. To is interested in issues of identity, using martial arts and Chinese culture. The piece was made up of two actors using material arts moves, spliced together over and over again in a video loop.

Jen Wu’s work, called *Meat City*, dealt with representation and identity, questioning sexuality and its limitations. The viewer was not sure if the video that she was modelling for a photographer was glamour modelling or pornography, thus pushing the boundaries of conventional sexuality and ideas of morality.

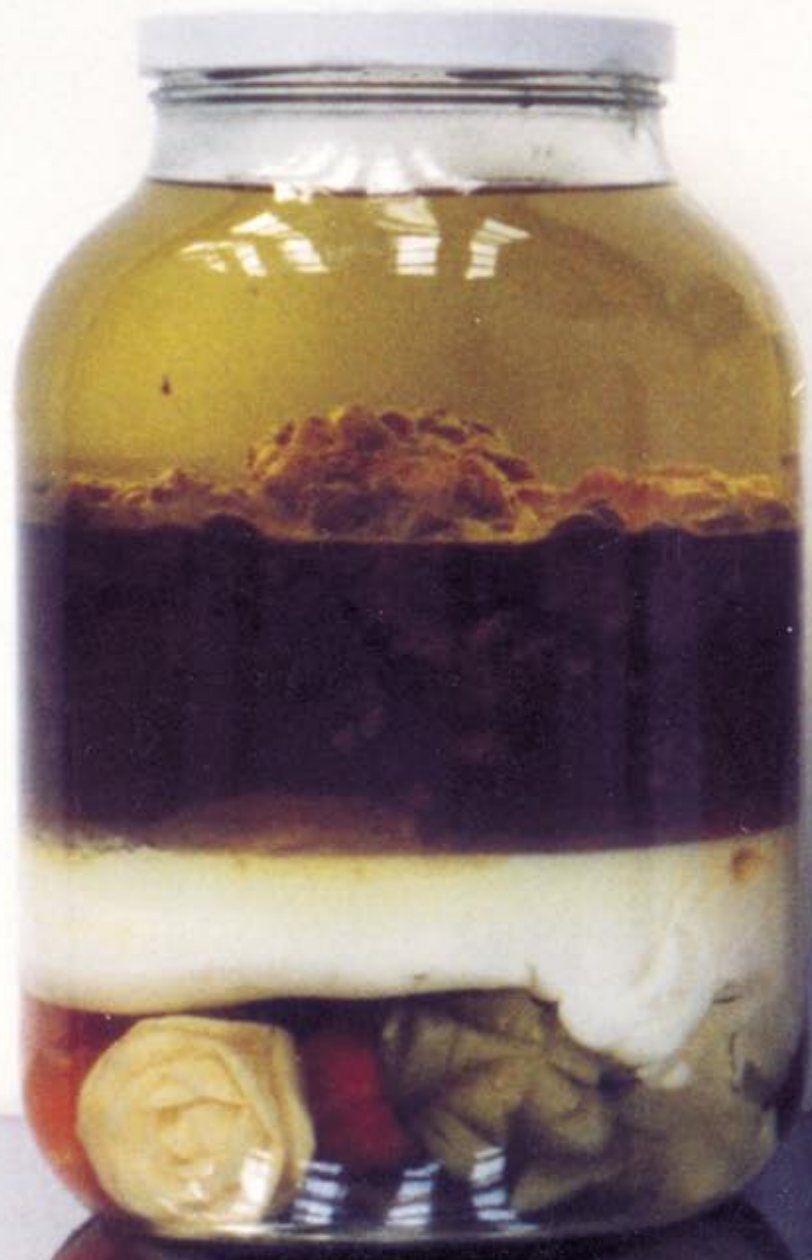
Oway Lau, an animation student at Central St Martins, showed a collection of six short animations, dealing with her experiences living in London and cultural differences she has encountered from a transatlantic move from Hong Kong. Pieces include *Artificial Intelligence*, *Couriers*, *Suffering My Mentor*.

JJ Xi & Cai Yuan are notorious for jumping on Tracey Emin’s bed, nominated for the Turner Prize in 2000. Three of their video-ed performance pieces and controversial antics were shown. In *Soy Sauce Ketchup Fight*, the two artists staged a performance using soy sauce and ketchup during a mock battle in the Mayday celebrations in which they demonstrated in front of riot police in Trafalgar Square. Other pieces included *Crawling*, where the two crawled on the floor in favourite tourist spots in camouflage and *Two Red Men*, when two literally red painted semi-naked bodies drove into the centre of London and attempted to enter the National Gallery.

As part of the screen, live cams linking Chinatown with Trafalgar Square to Leicester Square were simultaneously shown. There was a web site and full radio coverage provided by the BBC. Another sponsor of the event was the Metropolitan Police, whose large banners advertising the Met obliterated the main stage in Trafalgar Square. During a feedback session with the Met, we were told that Cai Yuan & JJ’s *Soy Sauce Ketchup Fight* was felt to be insensitive. In the context of the post-Lawrence case and their attempts to improve their image with minority communities, footage of heavy-handed riot police did not fit the bill.

Otherwise, from the organisation’s point of view it was a positive experience. They worked with high-profile partners and it was the largest public event that BCAA had been involved with. The artists were exposed to an estimated 1 million viewers in one day.

Development and management on this project was not an easy task. There was no funding to speak of and limited resources. One board member from the London Chinatown Association was available to manage the project on a voluntary basis and then relied heavily



on other volunteers to carry out the work. We had to overcome different expectations of what was good and meaningful art and prejudiced attitudes towards contemporary art. And we had to blend in with the Chinese business sector as well as reach age groups between five and ninety.

From my experience in working with Chinese communities in London, this came as no surprise as many centres are severely lacking in resources and often have no staff trained in arts management. There is a real need for support for organisations wishing to stage arts events and activities. Attracting future audiences raises other issues. In previous projects, we have had to pare down our ideas in order for the Chinese groups to understand and enjoy what we are trying to achieve. We need to look at the diaspora community and where it is at, what their needs are and what they are interested in. For example I have found that many members can't read or write in their own language. But in a climate where we are competing for funding, it is the most innovative and sophisticated projects that get funding. This makes it even more difficult to acquire much-needed resources for programmes closely tailored for the needs of the Chinese community.

Appendix A

Conference Programme

Seminar programme Saturday 22nd June 2002 10.30–17.00
Connections/Disconnections:
Museums, cultural heritage and diverse communities

This conference will examine how museums are responding to the challenge of drawing on, reflecting and engaging with cultural diversity and the complexity and multiplicity of today's society. It will explore the nature of existing and potential relationships between museums, their collections and communities at a local, national and international level. The presentations will consider some of the strategies deployed to involve and sustain a more culturally diverse audience, reflecting on the key issues of:

- communities; expectations and aspirations; partnership and ownership
- 'connections and disconnections' between diverse communities and both historical and contemporary collections
- opportunities for challenging and enriching cultural authority through engagement with diverse communities and the collection of intangible heritage
- the challenge of new technology alongside more traditional strategies in involving and sustaining new audiences
- opportunities for inter-cultural, inter-generational, inter-disciplinary and inter-agency initiatives

Set within a context of broader political and social realities, the conference is designed to bring together diverse stakeholders, museum professionals, educators, diverse communities and members of the general public with a view to fostering networks, promoting debate and informing future practice.

10.00 Museum opens
10.10 Registration and coffee

Communities

10.30 Welcome: David Anderson, Director of Learning and Visitor Services, V&A
10.35 Introduction by the Chair: Judy Ling Wong, Black Environment Network
10.40 Keynote Speech 'Cultural diversity within the UK and beyond: reclaiming the vision' Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, weekly columnist on The Independent, broadcaster and author of *Who Do We Think They Are: Imagining the New Britain*
11.10 'Separate Senses', Voices of Asian Teenagers in Kirklees, Rajiv Anand, Development Worker for Cultural Diversity, Resource (and formerly Kirklees Community History Service)
11.35 The story of immigration and settlement in Hackney: Designing Museums Capable of Reflecting a Diversity of Voices, Fiona Davison, Head of Hackney Museum Service
11.50 Working with communities in widening and sustaining audiences Eithne Nightingale, Head of Access & Community Development, V&A;
Clary Salandy, Mahagony Carnival Club; Amandeep Singh Madra, United Kingdom Punjab Heritage Association
12.20 Discussion / 12.45 Lunch and view exhibition of work

Collections and communities

13.45 Introduction Dr Deborah Swallow, Director of Collections and Keeper of the Asian Department, V&A
13.50 Connections and Disconnections – relationships between collections and communities Raj Pal, Principal Heritage Officer, Sandwell Museums

Workshops

Option A: Hidden heritage, multiple voices

Chair: Garry Morris, Outreach Officer, National Museums and Galleries for Merseyside
14.15 Questions of Cultural Authority – drawing on diverse perspectives and interpretations Dr Vivien Golding, Lecturer, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester
14.35 Museum Documentation of Intangible Heritage – new museum initiatives in the Western Cape, South Africa Gerard Corsane, Lecturer, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester
14.55 Hidden Histories, black history at the V&A and the Theatre Museum Dinah Winch, Curator, Research Department, V&A; Susan Croft, Curator, Theatre Museum; Stephen Bourne, Researcher, Theatre Museum
15.15 Questions and discussions / 15.30 Tea

Option B: New technology and new audiences

Chair: Kate Steiner, Deputy Head of Visitor Research Group, Science Museum
14.15 Shamina and the South Asian website, Julie Cornish, Education Web Projects Officer, V&A
14.35 Text messaging and other strategies for engaging new audiences, Dan Packe, Community and Youth Museums Worker, Sandwell Museum
14.55 Digital material, cultural heritage and social inclusion: 'Moving Here: The Peopling of Britain' project Sam Seager, Public Records Office
15.15 Questions, discussion and summing up / 15.30 Tea

Option C: Contemporary considerations

Chair: Rosie Miles, Curator: Prints, Drawings and Paintings, V&A
14.15 SW7 to SW9: a case study of exhibitions on black culture Carol Tulloch, Curator, Archives and Museum of Black Heritage
14.35 Remapping the museum: initiatives for new audiences Susan McCormack, Senior Curator, Contemporary Team, V&A, and Lauren Parker, Assistant Curator, Contemporary Team, V&A
14.55 Big Screen in Little Chinal: A project by Chinese artists Yeu-Lai Mo, British Chinese Artists Association
15.50 Exhibiting Black Culture international guest speaker Deborah Willis, Professor of Photography and Imaging, New York University
16.30 Questions, discussion and summary of the day / Close

Appendix B

Contributors' Biographies

>Rajiv Anand

Rajiv Anand was born and brought up in Northern Ireland; his parents moved from the Jalandhar District of Punjab in India after they got married. He was awarded a place at Bristol Polytechnic to study Foundation Art taking a keen interest in creating printed textiles going on to undertake his BA Hons in Printed Surface Design at Leicester Polytechnic which became De Montfort University. A year afterwards he went on to take a Master of Arts degree in Contemporary Art and Theory at Winchester School of Art. Whilst writing his dissertation on South Asian Post-Modern Feminist Art he was encouraged to apply for the post of Community Museums Officer (Asian Culture) at Bagshaw Museum in Batley, Kirklees W. Yorks. He was successful in getting the job and worked in Kirklees from 1995–2002. As Community Museums Officer the key area of responsibility was to increase the visitor figures of South Asian audiences to the Museum. This included various outreach and audience development projects with the local South Asian communities including elderly groups, special needs groups, young people and other sections of the community. In September 1998 he was appointed as Community Education Officer in the newly restructured service. Moved from Bagshaw Museum to Tolson Museum in Huddersfield to form the Community Education Team within the new Community History Service, the role of Community Education Officer was more generic. It went on to cover the whole of the District with a much more formal and informal education remit with a specialist area in Cultural Diversity, Access and Audience Development.

In February 2002 he was appointed as Cultural Diversity Development Officer with Resource. This was a new role and his main area of work was to advise on cultural diversity issues at a regional and national level. This is done through the Cultural Diversity Network and the Cultural Diversity co-ordinators in each of the nine English regions. The network also includes NIreland, Scotland and Wales.

In February 2003 he was appointed Project Coordinator (Youth and Arts) for the Runnymede Trust. The project is national and works with young people in recording and documenting their feelings and understandings on issues around heritage, identity, citizenship and belonging. This work has been conducted through a series of focus group research and will contribute a touring exhibition, policy publication, conference and national launch. Phase 1 of the project will be completed in June 2004. This opportunity has further heightened his understanding of what it means to live in a multi ethnic Britain and complements his previous work experiences in many creative ways. It has opened out many avenues for him to explore and has given him a footing in the race relations industry.

>Stephen Bourne

Stephen Bourne is one of Britain's leading authorities on black history. His books include *Aunt Esther's Story*, *A Ship and a Prayer* and *Sophisticated Lady – A Celebration of Adelaide Hall*. He has also contributed to *Black and Asian Performance at the Theatre Museum – A User's Guide*. He has programmed a number of events for the National Film Theatre, including a centenary

tribute to Paul Robeson. For the BBC's 1998 Windrush season, he researched and scripted Radio 2's *Their Long Voyage Home*, presented by Sir Trevor McDonald. Stephen has received two Race in the Media awards from the Commission for Racial Equality and, for Black in the British Frame – The Black Experience in British Film and Television (Continuum, 2001), he was shortlisted for *The Voice* newspaper's Black Community Award for Literature. Stephen has two new books published in 2005: *Elisabeth Welch – Soft Lights and Sweet Music* and *Speak of Me As I Am – The Black Presence in Southwark Since 1600*.

>Julie Cornish

Julie Cornish was the Education Web Projects Officer for Learning and Interpretation and is presently a Web Project Manager for the Web Team at the V&A. Her roles included project managing the implementation of a new content management system and re-design of the V&A website, launched in the summer of 2004. Her previous experience includes working with the V&A's South Asian Community Education programme, coordinating the Shamina project, an international touring exhibition of textile panels created by South Asian communities, and developing the Shamina and the Sikhs and Arts of the Panjab microsites.

>Gerard Corsane

Gerard Corsane is currently a Lecturer in Museum, Heritage and Gallery Studies at the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. He completed his MA in Museum Studies at Leicester in 1989 and in 1990 he started work in the History Division of the Albany Museums' complex in Grahamstown, South Africa. In 1992 he was promoted to the post of Head of the Division. In March 1996, he left the Albany Museums in order to dedicate time to the development of a national strategy for museum and heritage education and training in South Africa. While working on this, he also did consultancy work in a number of countries in the southern African region. In the last quarter of 1996, he drafted a business plan for the establishment of the Robben Island Training Programme (RITP) to provide fast-track positive action training to empower black heritage workers to move into middle and top-management positions in the museums and heritage sector. In 1997, Gerard was appointed as the first RITP coordinator and played a key role in the establishment of the Post-graduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies offered in partnership by the Robben Island Museum, the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town. Between November 1999 and

August 2002, he held a post of Lecturer in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, before deciding to move to Newcastle upon Tyne. With his work during the 1990s in South Africa, Gerard has experienced at first hand major processes of transformation aimed at making a society – with its museums – more inclusive and democratic.

>Susan Croft

Susan Croft is Curator of Contemporary Performance at the Theatre Museum. As Director of New Playwrights Trust 1986–9 she jointly initiated the establishment of the Black Writers for Stage and Screen database project with Black Audio-Visual Collective and was consultant on establishing the Second Wave Young Women Playwrights project, based in Deptford, which encouraged many young black women to begin to write for performance. As Principal Lecturer/Senior Research Fellow in Performance Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University she supervised the Arts Council-funded Live Writing research project focusing on how writing for live art and experimental theatre may enable the development of new forms addressing black experience. She has written essays on 'Black Women Playwrights in Britain' for the collection *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958* (1989), a bibliography of 'Black and Asian Playwrights Produced in Britain' for the *Black and Asian Play Anthology* (Aurora Metro, 2000) and contributions to the Routledge 'Companion to Black British Culture' (2001). Her book *She Also Wrote Plays: an International Guide to Women Playwrights from the 10th to the 21st Century* (Faber 2001) looks at the work of over 40 black women playwrights worldwide. She is currently compiling a major inventory of plays produced by British-based black and Asian writers. Since 1997 she has initiated a number of events on black and Asian theatre at the Theatre Museum including Black History Month events. These have included a display on the 19th century Shakespearean actor, Ira Aldridge, and two Black Theatre History Trails of the galleries including exhibits on Carnival (as part of Architects of Fantasy), Ballets Negres, the first black dance company in Britain and on South Asian dance. In 2001 she curated the Museum's major exhibition Let Paul Robeson Sing! which took as its cue Robeson's statement 'The artist must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative' and addressed not only his own artistic career and politics but his legacy for black theatre in Britain. She represents the Museum on the Black and Asian Archives Working Party. In 2003 she initiated and edited the publication *Black and Asian Performance at the Theatre Museum: a Users' Guide*.

>Fiona Davison

After completing a degree in Modern History and the Leicester Museum Studies course, Fiona started her career in museums as Assistant Curator at Greenwich Borough Museum Service. She then moved to South Wales where she was Assistant Curator at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery before moving to the next valley along to set up the Cynon Valley Museum Service from scratch. In 1993 Fiona was appointed as Curator of Hackney Museum Service. The service operated as a touring service from 1997 until 2002 whilst a new purpose-built home for the museum was established. The project was the first local authority museum building to be funded through the Private Finance Initiative. The museum opened in April 2002 with new displays on the history of immigration and settlement, funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. In August 2003 Fiona left Hackney Museum to become the Executive of the London Museums Hub, one of nine regional hubs tasked with leading the development of regional museums under the Renaissance in the Regions initiative.

>Dr. Vivien Golding

Dr. Viv Golding joined the University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies, as lecturer in Communication and Education, in January 2002. Her previous work includes 12 years organising art and design courses at Community Education Lewisham (CEL) and 10 years managing formal education provision at the Horniman Museum, London. In 2003 Viv was elected to serve on the Museum Association's 'Equal Opportunities and Continuing Professional Development Committee' and in 2004 she was appointed editor of 'ICOM-ICME News'. She is currently working on a monograph, *Learning at the Museum Frontiers: Identity, Race and Power*. Her publications include: 2005, 'The Museum Clearing: A Metaphor for New Museum Practice', in Atkinson, D. and Dash, P. (ed) *Social and Critical Practice in Art Education*, Trentham Books, Staffs, 51-66 2005 'Carnival Connections: challenging racism as the unsaid at the museum school frontiers with feminist-hermeneutics' in Anim-Addo, J. (ed) *Swinging Her Breasts at History*. Whiting and Birch, London. 2004 'A field-site of creative collaboration: Inspiration Africa!' in the *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 16, 19-36. 1999 'Working with diverse communities', in Moffat H. and Woollard V. (ed) *Museum and Gallery Education. A Manual of Good Practice*, Stationery Office, 56-68. 1998 *Cultural Journeys: Traditions from Africa*, Wayland Publications.

1997 'Meaning and Truth in Multicultural Education', in Hooper-Greenhill, E., 1997, (ed) *Cultural Diversity. Developing Museum Audiences in Britain*, Leicester University Press, 202-225.

>Naseem Khan OBE

Naseem Khan has been centrally involved in the formation of policy around Britain's cultural diversity since the 1960s, and in 1999 received the OBE for her services to that area of work. A journalist, researcher and writer, she was part of the small team that created one of Britain's first Black community newspapers, *The Hustler*, in 1968. Her freelance work for national newspapers, notably *The Guardian* led to a weekly column on alternative theatre in *The Evening Standard* and the job of Theatre Editor of *Time Out* until 1974. In that year, she was asked to conduct the first full-scale survey of 'ethnic minorities' arts' by the Arts Council of Great Britain, Gulbenkian Foundation and Community Relations Commission. The subsequent report, *The Arts Britain Ignores* (1976), opened the national debate on the nature of 'British' art and began a national change in policy and funding. It led to the establishment of MAAS (Minorities' Arts Advisory Service) that she headed for three years.

She has subsequently been co-director of the Academy of Indian Dance, Co-ordinator of the five-month alternative Festival of India (1983), author of a weekly column in the *New Statesman* for three years on the arts that review columns tend not to cover. As a researcher, she has undertaken many policy reports, including work for the Museums and Galleries Commission, Blackburn Museum, the Greater London Authority and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

She was Britain's official representative on the Council of Europe's Cultural Diversity transversal research project (1999–2002), and headed the Arts Council of England's Diversity Unit for seven years, until 2003. She currently runs her own consultancy.

>Susan McCormack

Susan McCormack is Senior Curator and Head of Contemporary Programmes at the Victoria and Albert Museum. She has been responsible for a number of exhibitions and projects at the V&A, including Friday Late View, Fashion in Motion, Give & Take and exhibitions in the Contemporary Space.

>Amandeep Singh Madra

Co-author of *Warrior Saints: Three centuries of the Sikh Military Tradition*, Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh (IB Tauris, 1999) and *Sicques*,

Tigers or Thieves: Eyewitness Accounts of the Sikhs (Paigraive Macmillan, 2004) Chaired the 28 July 2001 Preserving Sikh Heritage conference held at the V&A Museum. Contributor to *New Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP 2004). Curated and exhibited *Jawans to Generals*, a mobile exhibition exploring the Sikh contribution to the two world wars. Organised the 2001 and 2002 series of Sikh Heritage Lectures held at the Victoria and Albert Museum and subsequent regional lecture series in 2003.

> **Yeu-Lai Mo**

Yeu-Lai is an artist & curator currently living and working in London. She studied Fine Art at the Royal College of Art and Brighton University. As an artist her recent exhibitions include Ten Thousand Li, Open Eye Gallery Liverpool, touring to Collins Gallery, Glasgow, Folly Gallery, Lancaster, Impressions Gallery, York, Photofusion, London during 2002–04. From 1998–2002 she was the Education Officer at The British Chinese Artists' Association gaining extensive experience in organising projects and workshops for schools and the Chinese communities. She has spoken widely on the touring show Ten Thousand Li and various contemporary including Chen Zhen at the Serpentine Gallery (2001) and Asian Art, University of Brighton (2001). She curated Big Screen in Little China, a multi-media project in partnership with the GMI Screen, Leicester square and London Chinatown Celebrations (February 2002) and most recently fund raised and project managed Reassurance, a group show in partnership with BBC London 'Roots initiative' showing at SPACE, Triangle Gallery Hackney, London touring to Chinese Art Centre in Manchester from July 28 – 2 October 2005.

Publications include *Reassurance*, a booklet accompanying the exhibition, edited by Lisa Le Feuvre 2005, *Ten Thousand Li, Chinese Infusion in Contemporary British Culture*, group show catalogue, editors J. Barraclough, D. Chan & W. Leung. Essays include Diana Yeh's 'Ethnicities on the move: British Chinese Art Identity, subjectivity, politics and beyond' in *Critical Quarterly Magazine*, Sonia Boyce's 'Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves' in *Reverberations*, edited by Jean Fisher and Dr David Parker's *Through different eyes: the cultural identities of young Chinese people in Britain*.

> **Eithne Nightingale**

Eithne Nightingale is Head of Access, Social Inclusion and Community Development at the V&A. She has over 30 years experience of working in equal opportunities, post-16 education, community development and regeneration. At the V&A she leads the cultural diversity, social inclusion and

disability policies programmes and initiatives. She is also a photographer, has carried out education research on education in Bangladesh and advised on the development of community education in Kwa Zulu-Natal, South Africa.

> **Raj Pal**

Born and brought up in India, Raj came to Britain 27 years ago at the age of 17. As a result he regards himself as shaped by extremely varied cultural influences to a point where he feels it is impossible to define himself with reference to fixed notions of ethnicity, nationality or religion. A state of being more eloquently summed up by the writer Salman Rushdie once as being a bastard child of history.

His early working life started at the age of 17 with a long period of manual labour and mini-cabbing until he undertook higher education as a mature student. He came to the museums' profession in 1994 after having lectured for five years at a FE college. Starting as a temporary curator at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, he was uniquely lucky to work in virtually all disciplines in the profession before moving on to his current post of first managing Sandwell's museum service and then lately merging it with Sandwell Arts. He has a strong passion for the museums' profession and has involved himself in efforts to widen its scope to non-traditional visitors.

> **Lauren Parker**

Lauren Parker is a Curator of Contemporary Programmes at the V&A Museum, specialising in new media, audio and interdisciplinary projects. She has curated several exhibitions and events programmes including the V&A's first ever audio exhibition, *Shhh...* (V&A, 2004). Lauren is the author of *Interplay: Interactive Design* (V&A Publications, October 2004).

> **Carol Tulloch**

Carol Tulloch is a senior research fellow at Chelsea College of Art. She is co-curator of the V&A exhibition *Black British Style* and editor of the accompanying book *Black Style* (V&A Publications, 2004). Carol has published several articles on the dress culture of the African diaspora which include: 'Strawberries and Cream: Dress, Migration and the Quintessence of Englishness' (2002); 'That Little Magic Touch: The Head-tie and Issues Around Black British Women's Identity' (2000); 'There's No Place Like Home: Home Dressmaking and Creativity in the 1940s to 1960s' (1999), and 'My Man, Let Me Pull Your Coat: to Something: Malcolm X'. In addition, she was editor of the special edition of the journal *Fashion Theory*, *Fashion and Photography*. Her other exhibitions on black history include: *Picture This: Representations*

of Black People in Product Promotion (2002); *Tools of the Trade: Memories of Black British Hairdressing* (2001), and *Day of Record event Nails, Weaves and Naturals: Hairstyles and Nail Art of the African Diaspora* co-curated with Shaun Cole (2001), as well as sole curator of the exhibitions *The March of Women: Suffragettes and the State* (2003) at the National Archives; and *Grow Up!: Advice and the Teenage Girl at The Women's Library*.

> **Deborah Willis**

Deborah Willis is Professor of Photography and Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. She has taught at Princeton University, Duke University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Deborah Willis has successfully pursued a dual professional career. First an accomplished art photographer, she later became the nation's leading historian of African American photography and curator of African American culture. For more than 20 years, her investigation and recovery of the rich legacy of African American photography provides an invaluable and irreplaceable resource to filling the gap in American historiography.

From 1980 to 1992, she served as Curator of Photographs and Prints and Exhibition Coordinator at The New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. From 1992 to 2001, Willis was Associate Director for Research and Collections, Exhibitions Curator at the Smithsonian Institution, Center for African American History and Culture, Washington, DC. Willis' awards and fellowships include The MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for 2000 genius award; The International Center for Photography

Infinity Award for Writing in Photography, 1995; and she is the 1996 recipient of the Anonymous Was A Women Foundation.

Among her most notable book projects are *Black: A Celebration of a Culture; A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. DuBois and Portraits of Progress* (co-author David L. Lewis); *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (co-author Carla Williams); *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present*; *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*; and *VanDerZee: The Portraits of James VanDerZee*.

She has curated numerous exhibitions, lectured and published widely on the contributions of African Americans to contemporary and historical photography.

> **Dinah Winch**

Dinah Winch is Exhibitions and Collections Co-ordinator at Gallery Oldham with responsibility for visual arts. She was previously a curator in the Research Department at the V&A where she established a project to identify and research objects in the Museum's collections related to black and African histories.

She has a D.Phil in English Social History and joined the V&A in 1997 to work on the British Galleries Project as part of the Tudor and Stuart team. She is the author of *The British Galleries 1500–1900: A Guide* and was the researcher and script consultant on the British Galleries film *Art, Design and Empire*. She co-curated displays and gallery trails for Black History Month 2001 and 2002 on the historical representation of black people in European decorative arts at the V&A.

Appendix C

Websites

www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/index.shtml

<http://sunsite.wits.ac.za/mus/sa/index/hm#western>

www.peopleplayuk.org

www.britishbornchinese.co.uk

www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/shamiana

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The Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting the programme, Cultural Diversity, and the V&A 2000–2002.

The speakers and participants of this conference and the many beneficial partnerships, too many to mention, which has allowed the museum to work with diverse communities.

Naseem Khan OBE, for effectively bringing together these conference papers into the publication, and providing us with both an overview and a way forward.