

PRESS RELEASE

16 November 2021

CURATORS GET SHARE OF OVER £300,000 TO DEEPEN COLLECTIONS KNOWLEDGE THROUGH HEADLEY FELLOWSHIPS WITH ART FUND

- 11 UK museum professionals share £302,500 in funding for research into their collections
- Research promises to reveal new stories about collections – from Derby’s Egyptology artefacts to Cambridge’s Australian mammals, and from Scottish Iron Age pottery to York’s chocolate factories
- Funding goes to museums around the UK from Helston in Cornwall to Kenmore, Aberfeldy

Eleven professionals working in museums around the UK have been awarded funding to focus on research projects aiming to develop specialist knowledge around their institution’s collections. The Headley Trust and Art Fund announced today the successful recipients of the third round of the Headley Fellowships with Art Fund, a programme which provides time and resources to curators to complete in-depth research into their public collections.

Among the fellowships to be supported this year is a project to tell the stories of the people who made Kent’s **Powell-Cotton Museum’s** natural history and ethnographic collection possible; a plan to examine and display two previously uncatalogued Early Iron Age pottery assemblages at **Scottish Crannog Centre**; and an initiative which will examine the history of the **Museum of Cornish Life’s** collections. A total of £302,500 has been awarded in this third round of the programme, a £600,000 funding initiative created in 2018 with the Headley Trust and Art Fund. Intended to give curators time away from their day-to-day responsibilities to focus on research, the fellowships provide funding to back-fill curator’s posts for up to six months, while also providing them with up to £4,000 to support professional development, and fund other costs, and up to £3,500 to support sharing the knowledge gained with other curators nationally and with audiences. These public outcomes include organising exhibitions and digitising collections.

Helen McLeod, the Headley Trust, said, “The Headley Fellowships with Art Fund provide a unique opportunity for some of the UK’s most talented curators. With this support, they can take time away from the growing day-to-day pressures of their roles to focus on research that will lead to new ways to engage the public with their collections and make connections with their peers in the museum world.”

Jenny Waldman, Art Fund director, said, “Supporting the development of curators’ skills and growing expertise in museums is key to deepening knowledge around UK collections, and a core part of Art Fund’s charitable programme. The Headley Fellowships provide a unique opportunity

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for some of the UK's most talented museum professionals, and we are excited to find out what new stories our Fellows will uncover throughout their projects"

Launched to preserve and share the vital curatorial skills and knowledge at risk in the face of funding cuts, the Headley Fellowships are particularly vital now, with museums facing financial challenges posed by the pandemic.

This round's awarded fellows and their projects are:

- Jack Ashby, Assistant Director, University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge – Researching the history of the Australian mammals collection, exploring the human stories of how collectors worked in the past to shed light on the links between natural history and colonial history, and to highlight previously little-known figures who contributed expertise, such as women and Indigenous collectors.
- Rachel Atherton, Co-production Curator, Derby Museums – Researching Derby Museums' Egyptology collection, with the aim of enabling the museum to investigate and challenge traditionally told histories of ancient Egypt.
- Bret Gaunt, Project Officer, Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, Buxton - Restitution of Native American and First Nations objects acquired by the museum as part of a transfer of material from the Derbyshire School Library Service, including fully researching the artefacts and showcasing them at the museum.
- Tehmina Goskar, Director & Curator, Curatorial Research Centre, Helston - Examining the history of the Museum of Cornish Life's collections, charting the impact of collecting turning-points and examining ethical issues, while developing a toolkit for the sector. The project also includes the co-curation of an exhibition in Camborne to share the collections of the former Camborne Museum with local audiences.
- Dominique Heyse-Moore, Head of Collections and Exhibitions, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester - Researching and reinterpreting the museum's "world textile" collection, aiming to tell a genuinely global story of textiles at the Whitworth.
- Frances Houston, Curator, Scottish Crannog Centre – Researching Early Iron Age pottery, examining two pottery assemblages, both dated c.500BC but with differences in fabric, quality and decoration, that have never been catalogued, examined or displayed before, and creating a new museum display around them.
- Kathleen Lawther, Freelance curator, Powell-Cotton Museum, Birchington, Kent - Museum Makers, a project using the museum's archive and photographic collections to research and tell the stories of the people who made the museum's natural history and ethnographic collections possible, aiming to create a digital record of previously marginalised museum makers.
- Alex Patterson, Assistant Curator of Fine Art, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool - Decolonising the Sculpture Collection. This project will focus on key artists working from the mid-18th to the late-19th century, including the sculptor John Gibson (1790-1866). By working with Liverpool's Black and Minority Ethnic communities and conducting vital new research, it will transform how the collection is interpreted and

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address the erasure and absence of Liverpool's history relating to slavery, empire and colonialism in the gallery's collection.

- Adrian Plau, Wellcome Collection, London - Building a model for responsible repatriation by cataloguing and researching provenance of the museum's Jain manuscript collection from South Asia.
- Fiona Poole, Senior Curator, York Castle Museum - Researching the museum's collection of objects relating to York's main confectionery businesses, unpicking the human stories behind the museum's holdings by researching previously recorded oral testimonies, archives, and objects.
- Kathryn Warburton, Curator, Macclesfield Silk Museum - Machines and Memories: 20th Century Industrial Silk Machinery, a project to reinvigorate a collection of Macclesfield's 20th Century Silk Machinery, uncovering hidden stories relating to the machines' industrial impact and the lives of people who operated them.

Since its launch in 2018, the programme has supported 22 curators to pursue projects including researching The Troubles and community history in Northern Ireland or redisplaying Nottingham Natural History Museum's collections to tell stories around themes like climate change and the role of plants in society, and resulting in exhibitions like the 2019 *Displays of Power* at Grant Museum of Zoology and books like Karen Logan's *Curating the Troubles*.

For downloadable press images, please go to:

<https://bibli.artfund.org/web/5a24a052ea6ca94b/headley-fellowships-2021/>

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About The Headley Trust

The Headley Trust was founded in 1973 by Sir Timothy Sainsbury, who remains the Chairman 46 years later. It is one of 16 Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. The Headley Trust makes grants of around £4 million a year, largely in the Arts and Heritage field. Among its priority areas are museums and galleries, particularly those operating in the regions. The trustees particularly wish to support the professional development of curators, as well as the display, study and acquisition of British ceramics and the conservation of industrial, maritime and built heritage.

www.sfct.org.uk/Headley for information about the full range of the trust's interests

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. A further £2million has been made available for the 2021 Reimagine grant programme. Art Fund

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is independently funded, supported by the 131,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 is Firstsite in Colchester. www.artfund.org