

M4C DTP Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Marketing Template

Project Title				
MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND THE LEGACIES OF IMPERIALISM: CURATING COLONIAL VIOLENCE AT THE HORNIMAN				
LEAD INSTITUTION				
Name of HEI institution	University of Warwick			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	HORNIMAN MUSEUM & GARDENS			
Website URL	www.horniman.ac.uk			
THE RESEARCH PROJECT				
<i>(Max 750 words)</i>				
<p>French President Macron’s restitution report of November 2018, highlighted the need for museum directors in Europe to publicly articulate their position on the colonial legacies within their institutions. As ethical museum practice is now rethought, collections derived through colonial encounters, violence and dispossessions have come under renewed scrutiny. Whilst this has focused on provenance research and de-centring museum narratives through co-curation and collaboration with communities of provenance, contemporary debates about institutional decolonisation and structural racism rightly question whether current approaches go far enough?</p> <p>This project directly addresses this tension by examining the historical provenance and context of collections acquired through colonial military campaigns and direct violence held at the Horniman Museum. Crucially, it seeks to think critically about the practice through which such research is conducted, publicly communicated and acted on.</p> <p>The project will help the Museum think critically and reflexively about the processes through which knowledge of imperial artefacts is created and disseminated, how it may be used to foster new public conversations, debates and relationships, at both a local and national level, and how it might be put to action to address the deep structural legacies of Britain’s violent colonial past. The research will be framed by current academic debates on restitution and reparative histories of imperialism.</p>				
RESEARCH QUESTIONS				
<p>The project will establish the range of material relating to colonial conflict held by the Horniman, and then examine selected elements of the collection to highlight issues of curation and public action surrounding such objects, while identifying their historical provenance and significance.</p> <p>The key research questions framing th project will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the unknown histories of imperial military violence within these collections? • What research methods can uncover these histories? • How are such collections perceived, and how can they support equitable conversations about Britain’s colonial past? • What does it mean for an institution to house and retain such collections? • What future actions are needed with these colonial violence collections? 				

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE MATERIAL

The project is based on the integration of the Horniman's collections with related archival and contextual materials held here and in other archival institutions. The expertise of the Staff at the Horniman is of fundamental importance for the success of this project, as is the profile of the museum as a space open to public debate and critique, developed through the new World Gallery. The PhD student will have access to the Museum collections and benefit from the joint supervision provided by Warwick and the Horniman.

The full extent of the Horniman's collections relating to colonial wars remains unknown. The project will identify an inventory of relevant material, and provide a context and analysis of the most significant elements. The military and colonial-related collections associated with violence, looting or dispossession are extensive, but include: state regalia acquired during the Second Ashanti War; numerous objects from the British invasion of Tibet in 1903; Afridi objects from the First (1839-42), Second (1878-80) and Third (1919) Anglo-Afghan Wars; objects from the Battle of Beijing (1900), the looting of Benin City (1897), Sierra Leone's Hut Tax War (1898), Fulani regalia from Kano (1901), and a large collection from Sudan's Mahdist War.

OUTPUTS

In addition to the thesis, the student will be encouraged to participate in workshops and conferences to disseminate the findings of the project.

There will also be series of public outputs in which the student will play a key role:

- The student will play a lead role in authoring a Policy Paper, aimed at guidance for the Museums sector, on the handling of colonial violence collections.
- A regular blog hosted by the Horniman updating on work in progress and generating new public conversations.
- Developing critical gallery tours in the World Gallery and Music Gallery, highlighting objects acquired through colonial violence.
- Label interventions in the museum, highlighting untold histories relating to military collecting.
- Developing and critiquing online content relating to associated collections, biographies and violent colonial events.

The student will also participate in the organisation of Public Workshops at Horniman, developing public conversations about legacies of colonial violence, each with a distinctive theme, and will coordinate a public workshop, at Warwick, aimed at Midlands museum staff.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

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