

# Understanding British Portraits

## Brief for Fellowship Mentor – Decolonising portrait interpretation

Release date: 4 November 2020

Expected timescale of appointment: January to December 2021 inclusive; approx. 8 days' work

Fee: £1,600, plus any related travel

Based in own office, meetings principally by conference call/phone

Application deadline: **12 noon, 30 November 2020**

The Understanding British Portraits professional network (UBP network) wishes to appoint a Fellowship Mentor to work with two early career museum professionals throughout 2021. The Fellows will be designing and implementing defined projects engaging with their institutions' portrait collections which actively apply and embed decolonising and anti-racism practice. The Mentor will guide and support the Fellows in their research, learning, and advocacy, and in realising tangible outputs. The Mentor and Fellows will be supported throughout by the Understanding British Portraits Network Steering Group and Researcher/Coordinator.

The Fellowship Mentor role would suit a freelance museum/heritage professional with current knowledge of museum decolonisation theory and practice, and experience of implementing decolonising/anti-racism practice within a museum/heritage environment. We particularly encourage applications from Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates, as these groups are underrepresented within the museum and heritage sectors.

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## Understanding British Portraits professional network

With the support of Arts Council England and Art Fund, Understanding British Portraits is an active network with free membership for professionals working with British portraits including curators, collection-based learning professionals, researchers, academics and conservators. It aims to enhance the knowledge and understanding of portraits in all media in UK collections, for the benefit of future research, exhibitions, interpretation, display and learning programmes.

For more information on Arts Council England Subject Specialist Networks please see:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-collections-and-cultural-property/subject-specialist-network-fund>

The network is managed by a Steering Group drawn from the following organisations: National Portrait Gallery, London; Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; National Trust; Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums; and Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. Established in 2007, the network now has 1,300+ individual members and is engaged in the following activities:

- A specialist events programme of seminars/webinars and private collection visits.

- A Fellowship programme supporting early career professionals to develop their expertise, profile and professional network.
- A resource-rich website with practical toolkits, expertise database, a film archive of past events, online publishing, queries, portrait news and members' blog.
- An e-newsletter and Twitter feed to keep portrait professionals connected and informed.

See more at [www.britishportraits.org.uk](http://www.britishportraits.org.uk)

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### **Decolonising portrait interpretation Fellowships 2021**

With Art Fund support, we will soon be inviting early career museum/heritage professionals to apply for two year-long Fellowship opportunities. As a new departure for our Fellowship programme, we will invite applicants to consider how their institutions or collection portraits reflect a legacy of colonialism. Applicants will propose ways in which this legacy can be addressed in a tangible and sustainable way with regard to the curation, display or interpretation of some or all of their portraits. We will also expect applications to demonstrate institutional commitment to embed the principles of decolonisation and anti-racism in their practice going forward, and openness to learn from the Fellows' experience. The Fellowships will be a professional learning and development experience, with expert mentorship to support the Fellows' reading, learning, research and advocacy.

For details of current and past UBP Fellowships and Bursaries, please see the website here <https://www.britishportraits.org.uk/resources/fellowships/>.

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### **Fellowship Mentor Role**

The Fellowship Mentor will primarily support the two Fellows in realising their portrait-focused projects. This includes the following:

- Contribute to the Understanding British Portraits Steering Group's assessment of Fellowship applications.
- Guide the two Fellows in their research and understanding of decolonisation theory and activism as it pertains to the museum/heritage sector.
- Support the Fellows in researching decolonisation strategies in the sector and examples of best practice.
- Support the Fellows in working towards at least one tangible and sustainable audience-facing output.
- Support the Fellows in conversations with their institutional colleagues, helping the Fellows to advocate for their project and share their findings, in order to embed decolonisation practice more widely within their collection.
- Help the Fellows to develop their professional network of contacts.

The Fellowship Mentor will spend the equivalent of three days with each Fellow throughout the year, involving email, phone and/or video calls. An additional two days is factored in for meetings/liaison with the UBP Steering Group and Researcher/Co-ordinator. The Fellows and the Fellowship Mentor will report to the UBP network Researcher/Co-ordinator, who will provide all logistical support.

## Person Specification

### Essential

- Good knowledge of museum decolonising theory and practice
- Experience of implementing decolonising/anti-racism practice in a museum/heritage environment
- Understanding of questions of identity and representation as they relate to portraiture and its display/interpretation
- Enthusiasm for sharing expertise and supporting early career colleagues
- Clear, concise communicator – confident presenting ideas in writing or verbally
- Ability to work with a range of partners and stakeholders
- Ability to work on own initiative to a flexible timescale
- Creative problem solver

### Fee

A total fee of £1,600 plus any related travel is available for this work. The UBP network would expect the Fellowship Mentor to undertake 8 days' work (or equivalent), taken flexibly, to complete the role, between January and December 2021. This freelance contract is time-limited, and the Mentor will work from their own home/office.

### Application process

To apply, please submit the following documents by **12 noon, Monday 30 November 2020** to [cpegum@npg.org.uk](mailto:cpegum@npg.org.uk):

- **A letter** (no more than two sides of A4) giving evidence of how your skills, knowledge and experience meet the person specification.
- **A current CV**, with details of two Referees

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an informal interview by video call in December 2020. If you would like to discuss the brief further please contact Caroline Pegum, UBP network Researcher/Co-ordinator at the email above. Current employees of the National Portrait Gallery, London, are not eligible to apply for this role.

The UBP network is committed to equality of access to its employment. We welcome applications from all sections of the community. We particularly encourage applications from disabled and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates, as these groups are underrepresented within the Arts field /National Portrait Gallery. Should you require application details in another format please contact us at [cpegum@npg.org.uk](mailto:cpegum@npg.org.uk).