

**Call for applications:  
Fellowships for early career collection professionals in the UK:  
Decolonising portrait interpretation**

Release date: 23 November 2020

Application deadline: 18 December 2020 (12 noon)

Applications are invited for two Understanding British Portraits Fellowship opportunities available to early career museum/gallery/heritage professionals working in UK collections. The Fellows will each devise, research and implement a defined project – engaging with their institution’s portrait collections – that actively applies and embeds decolonising and anti-racism practice (see below).

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. UBP offers a programme of seminars/webinars, collection visits, Fellowships, and a resource-rich website to enable professionals to share new research, best practice, and innovative case studies. By these means, the network aims to enhance understanding of the genre in all media and time periods, for the benefit of future research, displays, and learning programmes. The Fellowship programme enables museum professionals to significantly enhance their portrait expertise, develop their professional network, and deliver a substantial output to benefit their home collection and its audience. Summaries of recent Fellowships can be found on our website here: [britishportraits.org.uk/resources/fellowships](https://britishportraits.org.uk/resources/fellowships).

**The Fellowships**

As a new departure for our Fellowship programme, we invite Fellowship applicants to consider how one or more examples of portraiture in their collections reflect a legacy of colonialism. This can pertain to object/collection provenance (commissioning/acquisition), curatorial or interpretation history, institutional cataloguing, and/or visual conventions and internal evidence within one or more examples of the genre.

Applicants will outline their proposed projects, identifying the relevance of the chosen portrait(s) to the history of colonialism, the proposed research methodology, and at least one tangible and sustainable output with regard to the curation, display or interpretation of the chosen portrait(s). The project should aim to develop the applicant’s expertise around decolonial museum practice, enhance their research and interpretation skills, develop their professional network and profile, and enable them to develop audience-facing outputs which respond to the decolonisation movement. We will also expect applicants’ organisations 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.

**Mentoring**

The Fellowships will be a professional learning and development experience, with expert mentorship to support the Fellows’ reading, learning, research and advocacy. The successful Fellows will manage their own timescales and project development, with access to the expertise of a dedicated mentor, the Understanding British Portraits Steering Group members ([britishportraits.org.uk/about-us](https://britishportraits.org.uk/about-us)) and National Portrait Gallery staff.

### **Allocation of Funds (£4,000 each)**

Fellows will be able to devote one calendar month to focus on their chosen projects, taken as a whole or as a series of days or weeks, as convenient. The budget allows for each Fellow's home institution to back-fill their post for one month (up to £1,800, with payroll evidence) to be taken at any time between January and December 2021 inclusive. Each Fellow's institution will be responsible for planning and administering this back-fill.

The remaining budget – £2,200 – is to be used for research T&S and to fund at least one substantial output from each Fellowship, such as a display, publication, event, digital resource, or other learning programme, etc. (these are suggestions only, and the Steering Group welcomes effective outputs that are most appropriate to the project described). The project, including delivery of the final output(s), must be completed by the close of December 2021. Payments will be made on receipt of invoices with relevant proof of spending from each Fellow's home institution.

Fellows will be expected to take up opportunities to meet their mentor, members of the network Steering Group, other current and past Fellows. They will also be expected to contribute to the Understanding British Portraits blog [britishportraits.org.uk/blog](http://britishportraits.org.uk/blog), a final summary report for the website, and to share their findings by other means such as seminar presentations, should the opportunities arise.

### **Eligibility**

Applicants should be early career, 'entry-level', or visitor-facing staff in the museum/gallery/heritage sectors in the UK. The Steering Group is particularly interested to see proposals from colleagues outside Greater London. We are committed to equality of access to our Fellowship opportunities, and 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 museum/gallery/heritage sectors.

### **Intellectual Property**

The project output(s) will be co-owned between the Fellows and their respective employers, and will be shared freely with the Understanding British Portraits network.

### **How to apply**

Please complete and submit the application form ([britishportraits.org.uk/resources/fellowships](http://britishportraits.org.uk/resources/fellowships)) in **Word** format only by **12 noon on Friday 18 December 2020**. Informal enquiries prior to the deadline are welcome; please contact Caroline Pegum, Researcher/Co-ordinator for the Understanding British Portraits network, at [cpegum@npg.org.uk](mailto:cpegum@npg.org.uk).

### **Assessment criteria**

All applications will be assessed by the Steering Group according to the following criteria:

- Originality of proposed project
- Relationship of project to applicant's collection
- Feasibility of project (timescale, budget, expertise)
- Expected impact on candidate, collection, and collection audience
- Benefits of intended output
- Scope of institutional commitment to learn from the Fellowship project and embed de-colonial strategies within their curatorial and interpretation practice.

### **Timescale**

Deadline for applications: **12 noon, Friday 18 December 2020**.

All applicants will be informed of the UBP Steering Group's decision before the end of **January 2021**.

The Fellows can work on their chosen projects between **January and December 2021 inclusive**. Funds will be disbursed flexibly during this period, in consultation with the relevant Fellows.