

**Brief for Online Event Programmer – Decolonising portrait collections and interpretation  
An Understanding British Portraits professional network event**

Release date: 13 May 2022

Expected timescale of appointment: June– December 2022; 8 days' work

Date of online event: TBD – November or December 2022

Fee: £2,000 including VAT

Based in own office, online meetings and occasional meetings in London

Application deadline: noon, Tuesday 7 June 2022

The Understanding British Portraits professional network (UBP network) wishes to appoint a Programmer for an online event that forms part of its expertise-development activity for museum/gallery/heritage professionals in the UK. It continues the network's commitment to support decolonising and anti-racist activity in the sector, examples of which include the November 2020 event 'From De-colonial to Anti-colonial: What's Next for Museum Interpretation?' (programmed and chaired by Sonya Dyer), and the 2021 Fellowship programme, which was dedicated to enabling UK museum professionals to apply the principles of decolonisation within their collections.

This is an opportunity to have creative input into the programming of a professional development event focusing on the challenge of decolonising portrait collections and interpretation in a museum/gallery/heritage setting. Two years on from the online event 'From De-colonial to Anti-colonial', we hope to highlight the challenges and possibilities of institutional change; examples of positive, tangible progress; and the professional needs of those undertaking this important work. The Programmer will work with the event steering panel in developing themes and structure, and invite and brief contributors. The Understanding British Portraits Researcher/Co-ordinator will support the Programmer and will take a lead in the logistics planning of the event.

The Programmer role would suit a freelance coordinator with current knowledge of museum decolonisation theory and practice with reference to portrait interpretation, and some experience of developing CPD activity for a professional audience.

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### **Understanding British Portraits professional network**

Supported by Arts Council England as a Subject Specialist Network, 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 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 professional members and is engaged in the following activities:

- A specialist events programme of seminars (in-person and online) and private collection visits.
- A Fellowship programme for professionals wishing to develop their portrait expertise.
- A resource-rich website with practical toolkits, expertise database, a film archive of past events, online publishing, queries board, portrait news and members' blog.
- A regular 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 collections and interpretation event, November/December 2022**

This event fits into the UBP network's active programme which combines conferences, study days and private collection visits open to those with a professional engagement with portrait research, conservation, curation or learning. Events range widely in theme, and are programmed by the Steering Group and network Researcher/Co-ordinator in response to feedback from the membership.

Some recent examples of events include:

- From De-colonial to Anti-colonial: What's Next for Museum Interpretation? (online event, 2020)
- Portraits of crime? The ethics of displaying real lives and people, in collaboration with the Crime and Punishment Collections professional network (2021)
- Museum Collections on Prescription: Health, Wellbeing and Inclusivity, in collaboration with the European Paintings pre-1900 network and the British Art Network (2021)
- Engaging Young People aged 14-21 with Portraits, in collaboration with Engage (2020)
- Curator-led tour of 'Portraying Pregnancy: From Holbein to Social Media' exhibition, Foundling Museum (2020)
- Why Exhibitions? Strategies, audiences, and future directions conference, in collaboration with in collaboration with the European Paintings pre-1900 network and the British Art Network (2018)
- Ham House study day (2018)
- What is a portrait? An exploration of representation and abstraction in portraiture, seminar (2017)
- Henry Hering's early asylum photography at Bethlem Hospital; the collection in context, seminar (2016)
- Hardwick Hall study day (2016)

In addition, the network holds its Annual Seminar each autumn at the National Portrait Gallery or online, a chance for members to share papers on new research findings, curatorial case studies and innovations in learning and audience engagement. For the full archive of events activities since 2007, please see [www.britishportraits.org.uk/events](http://www.britishportraits.org.uk/events)

This event will build on the network's current activity around decolonisation and anti-racism, and will add new voices, ideas and perspectives to this important subject. We hope it will explore the impacts and lessons from current decolonising activity in the sector, spotlighting positive examples of embedded, sustained and measureable change, as pertinent to portraits. It will recognise that institutional commitment is key to progress and fundamental in supporting colleagues working in this area. Other themes of interest include colonial legacy within collection acquisition and cataloguing, the agency of the subject within portraiture and ways of co-curation and co-interpretation with community groups.

The Programmer will work with the event steering panel to develop the structure of the event, thematic sessions and potential participants. The Programmer will lead on the creative development of the event and will invite and brief participants.

This online event is expected to take place in November or December 2022, and to run for approximately 2.5 to 3 hours. It will have live transcription and BSL interpretation, and will be recorded. Attendance will be free of charge. The format can include presentations, roundtable discussions, attendee Q&A and pre-recorded segments. The Programmer will report to the UBP network Researcher/Co-ordinator – who will lead on AV logistics, promotion, ticketing and evaluation – and to the event steering panel as required. The network Researcher/Co-ordinator will maintain budget responsibility for the event

### **Programmer Role**

Tasks will include:

- Researching the event subject and proposing content and structure.
- Researching suitable contributors for who reflect the diversity of the UK population, and represent a range of perspectives, e.g. curators, educators, academics, participants, etc. We are interested in including participants from a range of UK organisations working with portraiture, such as local authority venues, national and independent museums, archives, heritage organisations, etc.
- Agreeing contributors and a structure for the event with the steering panel (members of the UBP network Steering Group).
- Inviting and briefing contributors.
- Liaising with the steering panel, reporting on progress, and attending an evaluation meeting.
- Collaborating with the UBP network Researcher/Co-ordinator on
  - event logistics and budgeting
  - drafting promotional material
  - materials for attendees.

The Programmer will attend occasional meetings with the steering panel in London, though it is anticipated that the majority of communication will be by email and online meeting.

### **Person Specification**

Essential

- Good knowledge of museum decolonising theory and practice, with a particular focus on portraiture/fine art
- Understanding of questions of identity and representation as they relate to portraiture and its display/interpretation
- Experience of programming a professional development event
- Previous experience of working to budget
- Clear, concise communicator - confident presenting ideas in writing or verbally
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Experienced in working with a range of partners and stakeholders
- Has the ability to work on own initiative, alongside a small team
- Is able to prioritise and work under pressure
- Creative problem solver

### **Fee**

A total fee of £2,000 is available for this work from the network's Arts Council England project grant. The UBP network would expect the Programmer to undertake 8 days' work to complete the role, between June and December 2022. The contract is time-limited and the Programmer will work from their own home/office.

## Application process

To apply, please submit the following documents by **noon, Tuesday 7 June 2022** to [cpegum@npg.org.uk](mailto:cpegum@npg.org.uk):

- **A letter** (no more than one side of A4) giving evidence of how your skills, knowledge and experience meet the person specification and equip you to undertake this work.
- **A proposal** (no more than one side of A4) outlining how you would go about developing the event programme.
- **A current CV**, with details of two Referees.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an informal online interview. If you have any queries, or wish to discuss the brief further, please contact Caroline Pegum, UBP network Researcher/Co-ordinator on [cpegum@npg.org.uk](mailto:cpegum@npg.org.uk).

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 candidates and candidates from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, as these groups are underrepresented within the Arts field /National Portrait Gallery. Should you require application details in another format please contact us on [mail@britishportraits.org.uk](mailto:mail@britishportraits.org.uk).