

Thought Piece: Heritage as Contestation and Change: Decolonisation in Practice

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HERITAGE AS A WAY OF SEEING AND INTERPRETING THE WORLD

The histories we tell ourselves shape our understanding of the world and our place within it, but every history is a story shaped by us as well. In a lecture by writer Arundhati Roy (given in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2002, one year on from the September 11th attacks in the United States) she stated there is no work of fiction or non-fiction that has not been shaped by the personal ideologies and circumstances of one's life.¹ Personal understandings of the world are also relevant to conversations about how power is positioned and negotiated in society. Roy's works of fiction have grappled with power and social dynamics within the cultures and traditions of India. Her books have protagonists who resist social restrictions and conformity based on their individual ways of perceiving the world. Roy explicitly references John Berger's writing in the foreword of *The God of Small Things* (1997) – 'Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one' – and then proceeds to convey a simple story with great complexity by providing an array of perspectives with evocative texture.²

Longform prose delivered through a literary channel has the distinct advantage that readers can consume complex stories, while learning and processing information in ways that are shaped by their personal consciousness. In 1972, John Berger presented the BBC television series *Ways of Seeing* and later produced a book of the same name. The series was made in response to documentary series *Civilisation: a personal view by*

¹ Arundhati Roy, *Come September* (Lensic Performing Arts Center, 29 September 2002).

² Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (London: Flamingo, 1997), epigraph.

Kenneth Clark in 1969, and it questioned the standards of western aesthetics to highlight the underlying politics of art. *Ways of Seeing* challenged assumptions around a reliance on vision as the only way of knowing. It also outlined ways art is employed as a subjective understanding of ourselves within history, our place in the world, and how we are situated in landscapes.³

Art, history, heritage – these are all words we use to express elements of the human experience that have value to us. There are reciprocal properties between art, history, and heritage that draw on the subjectivity of experience and emotional affect, where our personal identities integrate with wider national politics. As Berger explains:

The experience of art, which at first was the experience of ritual, was set apart from the rest of life – precisely in order to be able to exercise power over it. Later the preserve of art became a social one. It entered the culture of the ruling class, whilst physically it was set apart and isolated in their palaces and houses. During all this history the authority of art was inseparable from the particular authority of the preserve.⁴

Art continues to accumulate powerful connections at heritage sites when re-examined through a lens of post-colonialism: when we seek to understand a wider range of cultural and historical perspectives.

Global perspectives and global identities have a renewed meaning in today's heritage landscape. As a museum professional, woman of colour, and transplant from the United States, there are inherent privileges as well as burdens in my working career. One of the acute privileges has been my awareness that working in heritage can engender greater understanding of the world through historic reflections on archaeology, anthropology, and art. Working in the heritage sector demands a constant reflection on how we translate information to the public and an awareness that practice must reflect a changing society. One of the acute burdens has been working in a sector that feels quite traditional. Diversification of the workforce as well as decolonisation of heritage practice has been part of the sector's consciousness for many years. Despite this awareness, I find it bewildering how often I find myself making a case for

³ John Berger, and others, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 11.

⁴ Berger and others, p. 32.

decolonisation needing to become embedded in institutional thinking. Established museum practice has been examined in consideration of increased social global awareness throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The rationale for that prolonged critique is that the need for decolonisation is pervasive throughout many aspects of heritage, from the language we use to the histories we portray – and this is a task without a definitive point of success. Our current social and political climate has brought even further challenges and contestations of history to the surface, with government parties intervening into heritage narratives and social activists asserting their rights to recalibrate the marginalisation and absence of their community histories.

Decolonisation demands those working in the field recognise the requirement of engaging in ways that respond to the needs of Indigenous communities, but also extends to the institutionalisation of colonial norms and inequalities that affect communities of colour. It is critical to note that decolonisation means understanding where privilege and power comes from to actively shift those advantages towards individuals and communities who have been marginalised and excluded.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have persuasively argued that the specific effects of colonialism on Indigenous communities demands a focused approach on reparative justice that addresses Indigenous needs.⁵ While I agree about the genesis and need for an Indigenous cultural focus, my specific decolonisation approach is through a lens of reparative justice regarding colonial extractions of art and artefacts mapped onto wider issues of historic representation. These issues must extend to the peoples whose migration or forced subjugation was a part of the colonial expansion project. There are many group identities who find themselves historically underrepresented in our heritage spaces, and their voices must also find representational light through continuous social justice efforts.

Broadly speaking, the heritage sector seeks to communicate stories under the banner of the preservation of history. Preservation and conservation are often used interchangeably, but there are important differences. According to the public body Historic England, preservation has a legal definition that means 'to do no harm', but the organisation also recognises this is only one part of preserving heritage, which is defined as '[a]ll inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere

⁵ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1 (2012), 1-40.

utility'.⁶ Supporting a values-based idea of heritage necessitates applying nuance to the word 'conservation', as it allows for ideas that embrace enhancement and recognises that heritage acts as 'a social dynamic reference point and positive instrument for growth and change'.⁷

Conservation, of course, is also a western-derived practice and set of principles that is not without critique. In an anthropological exploration of conservation practices, the authors of *Sensible Objects* (2006) have pointed out key issues around who has the authority to touch, fumigate, or freeze objects, in recognition that these practices of preservation are inadequate to accommodate ways of knowing and interacting with objects from different cultural perspectives.⁸ This challenge has also been acknowledged through the International Council of Monuments and Sites policies.

The idea that museums, archives, archaeology sites, libraries, historic buildings, country houses, or other related professionals (connected to heritage through academia and governmental bodies) can communicate historic truths based on the evidence of a preserved past, has been challenged and continues to be contested. Critiques of history presentation as heritage have centred around the nation-building paradigm, where heritage institutions put forward an abridged, simplified, and singular historic narrative, with at least implicit connections to wider political objectives of that time.⁹ Historians have also drawn attention to an idealised false consciousness connected to history as a strategy for coping with loss and change within the heritage industry.

⁶ *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (Historic England, 2008) <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/conservationprinciplespoliciesandguidanceapril08web/>> [accessed 20 July 2021] (p. 71).

⁷ Historic England, p. 15; 'International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance' (ICOMOS, 1999), <https://www.icomos.org/charters/tourism_e.pdf> [accessed 20 July 2021] (p. 1).

⁸ Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips, *Sensible objects: colonialism, museums, and material culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), p. 20.

⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) and Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7-24.

In Patrick Wright's book *On Living in an Old Country* (1985), the author explored the issues around the exponential increase in museums that were being established around the United Kingdom. Wright focused on the 'timelessness' and reappropriation of history through heritage displays, as well as ways institutions reinforce these ideas as national consciousness.¹⁰ The context of Wright's writing is crucial to understand. The role of increased transnational migration, deindustrialisation, and global economic change in the UK during the 1980s informed Wright's ideas about ways that the heritage industry yielded to the politics of a Conservative government in its presentation of a 'national heritage'.¹¹ This presentation was an extraction of historic narratives where sanctioned events and sites could be '[a]bstracted and redeployed, [such that] history seems to be purged of political tension; it becomes a unifying spectacle, the settling of all disputes'.¹²

A few years later historian Robert Hewison wrote *The Heritage Industry* (1987), which also connected the sudden increase in new museums in the UK to the issues of transnationalism and globalisation. He directed his critique towards the idea that many new museums were reinforcing a national narrative, or put differently, one narrative of events that equated to a singular historic point of view. This singular historic perspective was often fuelled by ahistorical nostalgia as an impulse that has become important to the preservation framework.¹³ But this heritage-endorsed nostalgia also became more pronounced in the context of the social instability and perceptions of social decline in 1980s UK.¹⁴ Hewison further commented on the subjectivity of our relationship with the past:

What matters is not the past, but our relationship with it. As individuals, our security and identity depend largely on the knowledge we have of our personal and family history; the language and customs which govern our social lives rely for their meaning on a continuity between past and present.¹⁵

¹⁰ Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 74.

¹¹ Wright, pp. 37-44.

¹² Wright, p. 65.

¹³ Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 25.

¹⁴ Hewison, pp. 45-46.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

Discussions of nostalgia in relation to history are as relevant today as they were then. If the past is a key part of our individual as well as collective identities, then sites, buildings, artefacts, and art become vehicles for how we communicate our anxieties about change onto the social and political landscape of the present. Our historic sensibilities of the past are certainly not based in a static reality or truth, but instead based on our own personal extractions of history that helps us interpret the world around us.

As a museum professional, I am very aware of the incredible amount of rigorous research that goes into the information presented to audiences. Explorations of community perspectives have been a normal staple of the process and practice that my colleagues and I have engaged in for many years. And yet, there is still more that we can do to counter passively-received notions of history.

Using the United States where I grew up as a pertinent example, the Confederate flag has continuously been used as a symbol of a separate southern heritage based on an adulterated version of history. In Clint Smith's article 'Why Confederate Lies Live On', he explored how some US southerners continue to deny that the American Civil War was fought by the Confederacy to ensure the continuation of slavery.¹⁶ Therefore, people continue to display the Confederate flag as a proud symbol of their heritage as rebellious freedom fighters, while refuting its blatant connections to racism. Denying slavery as the *casus belli* of the American Civil War is called the 'Lost Cause' mythology. This perspective on history took hold in southern states in the late 1860s, in a climate of post-abolition uncertainty with highly nostalgic sentiments of loss being projected onto a notion that states' rights and freedom were the reason for the war instead of the uncomfortable truth – white supremacy.¹⁷ While travelling around the plantations, cemeteries, memorials, and museums in the US, Smith encountered individuals who

¹⁶ Clint Smith, 'Why Confederate Lies Live On', *The Atlantic*, 10 May 2021,
<<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/06/confederate-lost-cause-myth/618711/>>
[accessed 10 June 2021].

¹⁷ For direct quotes from Confederacy officials about why their states were engaging in the American Civil War, and a discussion on the consequences of accepting nostalgic informed symbols in heritage see Ta-Nehisi Coates, 'What This Cruel War Was Over: The meaning of the Confederate flag is best discerned in the words of those who bore it', *The Atlantic*, 23 June 2015,
<<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/what-this-cruel-war-was-over/396482/>>
[accessed 22 June 2021].

thought of history and the era of chattel slavery as a ‘family history, history as eulogy, in which loyalty takes precedence over truth’.¹⁸ The boundaries between history and heritage are often collapsed, but the harm possible through the nostalgic mythology and forgetting of the dark and violent aspects of the past, means it is incumbent on the heritage sector to present both the subjectivity of history, and also to highlight discourses of power.

Archaeologist Laurajane Smith coined the term the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) in *Uses of Heritage* (2006). Smith defines heritage as the processes by which meaning is negotiated and created, but also confirms that archaeology has been dominated by western interpretations of history, materiality, and meaning.¹⁹ By situating the existence of the AHD within nineteenth- and twentieth-century archaeological debates over what should and should not be preserved, Smith draws out a material focus where monumental, old, and aesthetically pleasing outweighs the intangible elements of heritage. The materiality of the past is assumed to be unchanged, and its preservation is important for its ability to re-affirm national identity.²⁰ At the heart of Smith’s exploration is the awareness that while the AHD is not the only heritage discourse, it is the dominant one connected to ‘national heritage’, which in turn has been connected to identity-making. It is also relevant to recognise the role that heritage professionals and experts have in supporting the AHD, which has often constrained, undermined, and silenced community understandings of heritage. The Eurocentric bias of the AHD distorts ways social and cultural groups are perceived and represented and continues to be contested.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICS OF DECOLONISATION AND ANTI-RACISM

Working with and managing the contestations of history has real significance for how to work in the heritage sector. The current socio-political environment has an unfortunate resonance with assertions that we have been reciting for the last forty years. In the 1980s, Wright commented on how heritage legislation was regulating the industry, while Hewison drew direct parallels to ways monetary power was wielded

¹⁸ C. Smith, (para. 9 of 83).

¹⁹ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

²⁰ L. Smith, p. 18.

through UK Conservative government heritage legislation like the National Heritage Bill, which enabled direct influence on the sector.²¹ In the UK we are experiencing real party-political governmental interference in narratives of history that run counter to the AHD, with yet unknown effects on the sector's ability to explore and present contested histories.

The social and political Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was projected into international prominence in 2020, and spurred on a renewed era of critical examination for the heritage sector. BLM has been in existence since 2013 as a platform to surface issues of racially motivated violence and oppression of Black people, but also to affirm their positive contributions to society. The movement started in the United States in response to the acquittal of the police officer who shot unarmed Black teenager Trayvon Martin. In May 2020, the movement gained strength after George Floyd was killed by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The additional catalyst of communities experiencing the effects of a global pandemic, while the world was locked into various levels of confinement or restriction, meant that significant injustices were witnessed pervasively through media outlets with acute focus. International protests were organised in opposition to police brutality, but also wider issues such as systemic institutionalised racism.

In relation to the heritage sector or those involved in public history, protestors targeted symbols of national identity such as public statues and monuments. The statue of slave trader and philanthropist Edward Colston, which stood as a contested monument for many years in Bristol, was notoriously thrown into the river during a BLM city protest. The statue of Scottish slave trader and merchant Robert Milligan was removed from outside of the Museum of London Docklands following consultation with the local community. Traditional stories of historic figures across the UK were questioned openly, disrupting key narratives around the AHD for figures like Churchill.

The prominence of BLM protests created a focussed awareness about how historic narratives ignored larger issues such as the effects of colonialism and imperialism on communities of colour. Some institutions immediately made statements that they will become actively anti-racist. Anti-racism is a practice centred around honest self-reflection to consciously take action to change the unconscious ways white supremacy has crept into our ideologies, institutions, and policies today. Much like

²¹ Wright; Hewison, p. 118.

decolonialising practice, breaking down presupposed ideals must be supported by methodologies and actions. Anti-racism acts as an approach in support of wider decolonisation practice. As protestors asserted their rights to political representation and their stake in heritage by physically altering the symbols of the nation, party-politics intervened.

In September 2020, the Culture Secretary wrote a letter to the DCMS and museum bodies arguing that the government does not support publicly funded bodies removing historic objects and contested heritage, urging re-interpretation and an expectation that 'Arm's Length Bodies' approach to issues of contested heritage [...] be consistent with the Government's position'.²² The letter proceeds to outline a mandate that publicly funded institutions 'act impartially' and insinuated that government funding could be withheld without compliance.²³ The implications of this kind of direct interference into the role of historic presentation in the sector supports notions that heritage is deeply shaped by current socio-politics, but also that choices institutions make in the presentation of history have strong political ramifications.

In 2020, protestors who declared that monuments to national history excluded their perspectives raised valid concerns around the impact of art on society. When we do not explicitly name racism as one of the justifications for colonialism, nor acknowledge its lasting impacts, we ignore an entire part of British society who feel misrepresented through heritage. Naming and challenging racism is emotive work, but necessary for understanding how history impacts on the people affected by racist ideologies and policies embedded in society today. A refreshed look at public statuary that commemorates events of domination or individuals who supported racist ideologies, highlights how we have been lulled into a sense of false consciousness that ignores the unacceptable events of the past and the impact they had on individuals who have been written out of history. Claims that acknowledging these inequalities is akin to 're-writing history' is an attempt to maintain the status quo, and ignores the

²² Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Oliver Dowden, 'Letter from Culture Secretary on HM Government position on contested heritage', 28 September 2020,
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-culture-secretary-on-hm-government-position-on-contested-heritage>> [accessed 11 October 2020] (para. 4 of 7).

²³ Ibid.

reality that conservation of history, places, or objects must embrace enhancement and change by being intellectually and communally re-assessed.

CATEGORISING AND ORDERING THE WORLD- COLLECTIONS AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

Until now I have been writing generally about the interplay between heritage, politics, and the tensions presented in the histories communicated to the public, which can become a battleground for how power is ideologically exercised. But it feels timely to make a slight departure and look back at how museums, as a specific subset of the heritage sector, have been inherently political since their formation. Even the earliest private collecting through the 'cabinet of curiosity' concept within the home was not without political impact. Europeans collecting 'curiosities' either at auction, by the individuals they funded, or through their own pursuits, became imprinted onto the European knowledge landscape through displays shown in their palaces and homes.²⁴ The spectacle of the cabinet related to elite private collections of mainly men, who sought out ways of representing their wealth, status, taste, and influence in an increasingly expanding world.²⁵

As a way of understanding the known and unknown world, collectors were drawing the viewers' attention to their ability to 'dominate many environments'.²⁶ While early displays were intended as a microcosm of the universe distilled into the cabinet with little scientific aim, the practice of collecting and ambitions were altered as various methodologies developed.²⁷ The eighteenth-century intellectual movement of the Enlightenment, highlighting reason and scientific method, would soon see its application in the organisation reflected in cabinets. Collections also began to include the art and artefacts from cultures in areas of colonial expansion and exploitation

²⁴ See *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

²⁵ Arthur MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 11-33.

²⁶ Nicholas Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good For in the 21st Century* (London: Reaktion, 2016), p. 11.

²⁷ MacGregor, p. 11; Alessandro Tosi, 'Wunderkammer vs. Museum? Natural History Collecting During the Renaissance', in *From Public to Private: Natural History Collections and Museums*, ed. by Marco Beretta (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2005), pp. 41-58 (p. 47).

projects. There was an explicit connection between famed affluent cabinets of collectors and their access to wealth connected to global expansion. The eighteenth-century cabinets of Dutch merchantmen, for example, benefited from the Netherlands' domination of sea trading routes to Southeast Asia and access to a wealth of Asian arts.²⁸

The connection between collecting, knowledge, and social prestige applied even earlier. In *Curiosity and Enlightenment*, Arthur MacGregor gives a cogent example of Dutch artist Rembrandt's cabinet of *naturalia*, ethnographic objects, and antiquities being formed as a conscious effort to show his intellectual prowess in addition to his known artistry.²⁹ Many private collections served as the basis for encyclopaedic museums such as the Prado in Madrid or the Uffizi Galleries in Florence. Physician Hans Sloane's private collection became the basis for the British Museum in London opening in 1753 and ushering in the time of the museum as an institution of civic learning.

In the nineteenth century, learned societies in Britain began to focus on ethnology as a new field of interest, and in the US, this was reflected in the focus on archaeological methodologies. Both emergent fields had an impact on the collection and display methods that would allow the practice of museum anthropology to come into its own.³⁰ Other emergent scientific methods such as the Linnaeus taxonomy created a hierarchical classification system for application to zoological and botanical species, but he also applied a division of species to humans. Previous natural philosophies and collecting ideologies shifted towards more concrete orderings of the world. Private cabinets of curiosity influenced by a collector's taste or flair for theatricality fell out of fashion and gave way to a standardised system of categorisation. The museum became a place where newly established scholarly fields focused on the examination of distant societies through art and artefacts, which created standardised hierarchies of value that applied across arts as well as the descriptions of cultures and people.

²⁸ MacGregor, p. 32.

²⁹ MacGregor, p. 67.

³⁰ G.W. Stocking Jr., 'Essays on Museums and Material Culture', in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. by G.W. Stocking (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 3-14 (p. 7).

The Ethnological Society of London promoted collecting ethnographic material to understand the evolution of man through technology, but they were also interested in tracing 'racial difference' and its place within human history.³¹ Some society members, such as Lieutenant-General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, adopted a typological organisation of his collection under an evolutionary banner as a 'tool for the study of the material culture of present exotic peoples'.³² Pitt Rivers' system established a hierarchy between the arts of civilized and uncivilized cultures. While this historic classification system still exists within the display of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, it has been critiqued and addressed in many ways over the years partially in response to the display's historic connections to the now de-bunked 'race science' that served as a partial impetus for collection.³³

The removal of art and artefacts from colonial territories and peoples functioned as a means of celebrating the prowess of colonising nations.³⁴ But it also served internalised western narratives that claimed that 'salvaging' the art and artefacts of these countries supported a civilizing mission. The hierarchy used by museums to classify and order the world via collections was supported by ideological constructions like racial difference, which reinforced the rationalisation of a hierarchy amongst people.³⁵ This was the same ideology which had long-informed a state sanctioned

³¹ William Ryan Chapman, 'Arranging Ethnology: A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition', in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. by G.W. Stocking (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) pp. 15-48 (pp. 20-22).

³² Chapman, p. 26.

³³ While 'race' continues to have real impacts socially and politically, 'scientific racism' was supported by various theories, including studies of skull size. Physician and anthropologist Samuel Morton collected skulls from around the world and attributed the larger skull sizes of 'Caucasians' to greater intellect, inculcating a hierarchical basis that positioned white people at the top of a racial hierarchy. This theory also justified existing and future colonial domination and dislocation of Indigenous communities, as well as the continued enslavement of African populations in the 1830s and 1840s. Genetic research has revealed all humans are closely interrelated and have categorically established that 'race' is a construction with no scientific basis. See Dan Hicks, *The British Museums: the Benin Bronzes, colonial violence and cultural restitution*, (London: Pluto Press, 2020).

³⁴ L. Smith, p. 18.

³⁵ In the edited volume, *The Dead and their Possessions*, Cressida Fforde explains how the collection of human remains from Indigenous Australian communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was used as evidence, much like the material heritage collected from source communities, of the 'primitive'

narrative of history – that colonialism was good for the colonised. Anthropologist Aaron Glass summarised the variety of colonial collecting objectives as follows:

Ethnographers may have collected the possessions of the “vanishing races” as a means for preservation and study under salvage paradigms, missionaries and government administrators often removed objects as part of the larger colonial project of conversion and assimilation. Both scientists and politicians agreed that the proper place for Native objects (and Indians, metaphorically) was metropolitan museums, while missionaries often maintained private collections and exhibits as pedagogical tools in the eradication of heathenism. Government legislation supported the wholesale removal of cultural property by attempting to suppress practices in Canada (with the 1884 Federal Indian Act prohibiting the potlatch) and the US (with the outlawing of religious practices such as the Sun Dance).³⁶

From an anthropological perspective, a museum collection has been theorised as a functioning embodiment of ‘hierarchies of value, exclusions, [and] rule-governed territories of the self’.³⁷ We often take these values for granted without questioning the social constructs connected to our understanding of art.³⁸ Much of what is present within the museum have often been things that have been removed or ‘vanished’ from society, e.g., extinct species or colonized Indigenous community objects. Acknowledging ways in which the museum acts as a vehicle for outdated notions of presence and absence in society comes part of the way towards the decolonial agenda,

nature of ‘lower races’. She goes on to explain how Darwinism took up an argument that the biological and natural differences that could be observed through Indigenous Australian human remains provided the “hard” evidence that European governance was necessary, and this ideology helped ‘relieve imperial power of moral responsibility for the decimation of indigenous populations’. See Cressida Fforde, ‘Collection, Repatriation and Identity’, in *The Dead and their Possessions*, ed. by Cressida Fforde, Jane Hubert and Paul Turnbull (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 25-46 (pp. 29-30).

³⁶ Aaron Glass, ‘Return to Sender’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 9 (2004), 115-139 (p. 124). The word ‘Indian’ can be used as a legal identifier of ethnicity in Canada and can be a self-ascribed identity by mainland USA communities. It is used as part of the original quoted text above.

³⁷ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 218.

³⁸ Berger and others.

while examining the systems and language of classification imparted on these collections is also critical.

Classification is not immutable and categorisation systems are important to challenge. Using any catalogue inventory as a way of ordering and keeping track of things, especially when collections may be extraordinarily large, does serve a useful purpose. The problems around the catalogue are the entrenched constructs that have been standardised around its use – a demand for a single source of authoritative terminologies, conformities of description, distanced and non-emotional language to enforce a tone of authority, and the imposition of western epistemologies onto global material cultures and traditions. Additionally, when material culture has been treated as evidence for distant cultures, as in the case of ethnology and archaeology collections, it becomes clear why the language we use in the present must be updated.

Some of the most easily recognised issues in the catalogue are the outdated and offensive terminologies present in descriptions of collections. I can recall more instances than I would like to where I learned historic and offensive racial slurs by reading the terms in an object description within digitised catalogue databases. Addressing the colonial hangovers of outdated descriptions of collections is something that I am working to address in my current role at the National Trust. We have created a set of guidelines to help us look for key terms, names of battles, place names, and issues of visual and written representation that require honest acknowledgement. Correcting outdated event names such as replacing 'The Indian Mutiny' with the 'Great Rebellion of 1857' because of its bias towards a Eurocentric victor's perspective is somewhat straightforward to tackle, but we must document any language we remove to prevent the erasure of institutional histories.

Instances where ethnic group names have been re-claimed and changed demand cultural competence or a continuous awareness of current events. The colonial inheritance of the museum catalogue has typically relied on the established borders of the nation-state as a means of providing collection origin attributions. We are becoming ever more aware of the cultural specificity needed to describe collections in a meaningful way and to stop essentialising geographical diversity. This has demanded internal advocacy at times so we can add new terms and re-classify objects to regions that may not have officially recognised status like Tibet, or other origin communities within larger nation-state boundaries.

Other colonial biases can be more nuanced and difficult to address. A critical element of the collections we are trying to address at the National Trust are the paintings, family portraits, and prints that visually depict people of different racial backgrounds and present challenges around how they are described (or are not) in the catalogue. We have family portraits of historic owners at our places, which depict individuals with their Black attendants who may be real or fictional. Sometimes the attendants have been described with derogatory language in the catalogue which we are addressing, but sometimes they have not been mentioned at all when all other elements of a painting such as the pets, room setting, and background were described in the catalogue. Even the possessive grammar used to describe Black attendants often indicates a tone of ownership or coercion, when we do not know if the person was enslaved, or if they held one of the many integrated roles of service within a British household demanding a recognition of their agency. Working with prints and paintings in this focused way has been an eye-opening experience. The work has enabled a rich ground for exploring the ways language encodes the stereotypes and racial hierarchies that underpinned early collecting practices. But it has also been personally painful to think through how much inherent bias needs to be undone to truly make a difference.

The publication of knowledge on a database also requires interrogation. It may not be appropriate to share collections because information around items may be culturally regulated and restricted for particular members of that community. The idea of purposefully withholding knowledge goes against the ideals of the museum as a place for civic learning, and instead demands we accept a different way of reconciling our responsibilities towards history through the context of decolonial practice. The entanglements of colonialism within the ordering of knowledge via collections, provides a useful focal point for how decolonisation efforts need to permeate all elements of museum practice.

RE-CLAIMING NATIONAL AND CULTURAL SYMBOLS

Issues such as the colonial acquisition history of objects, and most importantly, the experiences of colonialism itself became aspects of heritage that demanded attention, largely through the social justice efforts of Indigenous communities and wider communities of colour. The 1980s and 1990s saw a steady increase in communities

across the Americas, Oceania, and Africa publicly acknowledging their stake in representations of their identity and seeking out greater control over the care of their art and artefacts.³⁹ The ‘othering’ and misrepresentation that had occurred for so long in the museum was addressed through protests over sovereignty issues and the struggles to autonomously define cultural identity in connection to the need for greater control and access to the museum as a knowledge resource.

For example, touring exhibition *Te Māori* (1984-1987) became a widespread vehicle for prioritising Māori perspectives on *taonga Māori* (cultural objects). It provided an international platform that incited a greater focus on the New Zealand government’s responsibilities to Māori community rights and sovereignty in relation to land and resources. The issue of control continues to be important for Indigenous cultures finding ways to connect to their cultural heritage by making claims for access to the lost cultural knowledge in museums today. Laurajane Smith describes this work as ‘representational politics’, where an Indigenous identity carries political weight through assertion of a dissonant identity with opposing values to western ideologies.⁴⁰

It can be said that Indigenous groups feel a different responsibility to objects than western standards implement, and so this can be the first base for understanding how heterogeneous values in the art world can coalesce, but there are limitations. An overemphasis on individuals being defined by their connection to material culture as a central feature of their world perspective and identity is also problematic. There is the potential to confound the material culture/identity connection between Indigenous groups as a marker of unchanging identities one must adhere to in order to be considered ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’.⁴¹ The meanings and connections that are significant to collections transform and shift with changing socio-political scenarios, changes in location, and like communities, the power of collections are continuously realigned and reshaped.

Of critical importance to the decolonisation discourse today has been the way collecting histories and ownership is often contested by groups who want control or

³⁹ See Ivan Karp, ‘Culture and Representation’, in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and politics of museum display*, ed. by Ivan Karp (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 11-24.

⁴⁰ L. Smith, p. 295-296.

⁴¹ See Clifford; Richard Handler, ‘Who Owns the Past?’, in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. by Brett William (London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 63-74.

the return of their cultural heritage. The accumulated past experiences of colonialism such as disenfranchisement and dispossession from symbols, cultural practices, and land, are critical for framing museum repatriation and restitution claims today. Repatriation, as the return of cultural patrimony from heritage institutions to an identified owner or collective of people, and restitution, as the return of cultural patrimony taken by theft or illegal means to a nation or government, are active ways that a holding institution can engage with the complex histories of objects and power. After the dispossession of land and home, losses of art and artefacts further alienated communities from their cultural knowledge, familial connections, and identities. Especially in relation to efforts to the repatriate the remains of ancestors, returns can act as a healing process that bridges community losses of memory and enables new cultural meanings.

The idea that art or artefacts could be owned by a collective group is an ideology with origins in Europe. In 1815, when European monarchs called for the return of their art and artefacts after the French Revolution of 1789 and the Napoleonic wars, an alliance of anti-French officials spurred on by ideals of traditional identities for their emergent nationalisms, confirmed the importance of physically having their plundered art and artefacts returned by requesting the restitution of their 'cultural property' from France.⁴² At that time, the idea of cultural patrimony and group ownership regarding the rights of western European countries was respected, but all other parts of the world were fair game for the imperial extraction of cultural patrimony.⁴³

From Australia and New Zealand to North America, the academic and museological framing of repatriation has been in terms of ownership over property. What is missing has been an acknowledged understanding that the debate itself is framed in western ideologies that are a product of colonialism. The dominant terminology that determines what is important and at stake for museums, such as authenticity, ownership, and preservation are juxtaposed against Indigenous interests in autonomous histories, rights, informed control, and better access to collections. This poses the debate in terms of a fierce divide between the parties involved. Arguments

⁴² Elazar Barkan, 'Amending Historical Injustices: The Restitution of Cultural Property', in *Claiming the Stones/Naming the Bones: Cultural Property and the Negotiation of National and Ethnic Identity*, ed. by Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002), pp. 16–50 (p. 18).

⁴³ Barkan, p. 19.

over repatriation using this framework leave little room for finding a workable middle ground. Karen J. Warren suggests that the dispute can be thought of as the need for appropriate guardians over non-renewable resources.⁴⁴ The notion of collaborative goals is also important as Indigenous communities have been left out of decisions and information processes since the inception of the museum. What many groups want and have emphatically demanded has been an acknowledgement of their wishes and respect for their authority and cultural knowledge, alongside substantive action to restore their resources.

HERITAGE RETURNS IN PRACTICE

In 2017, the National Trust UK received a request for the return of Hinemihi the Māori meeting house from Clandon Park in Surrey, England to New Zealand. For Ngāti Hinemihi, Hinemihi was a powerful woman who lived in the sixteenth century. She is not a legend but a real ancestor who Ngāti Hinemihi count among one of their most powerful matriarchs. In 1880, the Ngāti Hinemihi community were living in Te Wairoa, New Zealand, and their chief Aporo Te Wharekaniwha commissioned Hinemihi, the meeting house which became the embodiment of her spirit, and therefore brought her to life when the house was completed. There is far too much to say about the life of Hinemihi in New Zealand, her time in England, and the continuous connection she has had with her ancestral community during her 129 years in the UK so far, so I will stick to the key points of relevance to this piece.⁴⁵

Supporting Hinemihi's return process was one of my first projects at the National Trust. When Heritage New Zealand made the request to return Hinemihi on behalf of the Tūhourangi Tribal Authority, they offered to broker the creation of replacement Māori meeting house carvings as part of an exchange with Clandon Park. Clandon had been devastated by a fire in 2015 that saw the loss of the mansion and many of its collections. The site was going through a process of assessment and conservation

⁴⁴ Karen J. Warren, 'A philosophical perspective on the ethics and resolution of cultural property issues', in *The Ethics of Collecting Cultural Property: Whose Culture? Whose Property?*, ed. by Phyllis Mauch Messenger (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), pp. 1-26.

⁴⁵ See Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 49-75.

renewal. To take the exchange proposal seriously and to adhere to the western legal systems that codify Hinemihi's significance and value, we commissioned a team of international heritage consultants to help assess the impact an exchange would have for her various communities in the UK and in New Zealand.

On a heritage and cultural register, one of the key significant attributes of Hinemihi was her ongoing use and repair at Clandon with the significant guidance of Māori and Pacific Islander communities over time. We also surveyed wider communities of interest around the potential impacts of an exchange, and most were in support of the idea. This led the National Trust to agree (in-principle) to the exchange of carvings in late 2019. The key elements that contributed to getting approval for this process have all been well-positioned within the sphere of decolonisation work, such as the idea that conservation is the management of continuous change and, therefore, a renewed meeting house at Clandon supports the continuous evolution and journey of Hinemihi. For me personally, it was always clear that Indigenous approaches to renewal, alongside collaboration and community consultation must be weighted more significantly in decision making because what makes collections meaningful are the people and stories around them. This is also relevant to taking reparative actions as a form of honest redress. It would have felt wrong to make a future decision about Hinemihi, a living meeting house of international importance, without taking Māori perspectives into serious account.

The proposal of creating new carvings at Clandon Park while returning Hinemihi to her origin community also presented a great middle ground that addressed the aspects of loss within a western sense of ownership, which the heritage industry has been regulated to minimise. The details of Hinemihi's return and what might come back to the UK are still relevant issues that are being actively defined, which keeps her return status as 'in-principle' until future plans are finalised.

The idea of exchange over repatriation is certainly not easy to replicate when groups want their cultural property or ancestors to return. Hinemihi also represents the special prowess and experience Māori communities have in translating between world views.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, for many holding collections, a common fear is that once one

⁴⁶ In New Zealand, Māori communities have long been involved in the negotiation of their cultural heritage, with the repatriation of their lands through the Waitangi Tribunal hearings underscoring this history. This process of negotiation continued with the national museum Te Papa Tongarewa

thing is repatriated, the rest of the objects will have to be repatriated. Though this 'floodgate myth' has yet to be an aspect sought by Indigenous groups, the continuation of this fear speaks to the nature of museum identity and established practices where preservation equates to anxiety over loss.⁴⁷

Under Euroamerican law, there is nothing legally binding an institution to return items if the ownership of objects has been established from authorized donor or purchase circumstances. A key legal exception is the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). NAGPRA is a United States Federal Law enacted from 1990, where US government agencies and institutions must return sacred items of cultural patrimony and human remains to descendants culturally affiliated with Native American and Native Hawaiian communities. This means that Native American collections have received government mandated and increased attention in some museums in the US. The implementation of NAGPRA demanded a systematic review of what exists, and a shift from classifying collections by nation-state boundaries to the level of federally recognised tribal groupings. This became necessary for the legal repatriation compliance needed to notify groups about the location of their collections.

Control over misappropriated human remains is one of the most evocative issues within repatriation discourse. Skulls, skeletal remains, mummified body parts, and heads taken for anatomical analysis in museums has been equated to the deliberate process of cultural destruction in places like Australia and North America.⁴⁸ But these issues are relevant for any marginalised group whose ancestral remains were collected without permission as part of early comparative studies of man. The Herero and Nama populations of Namibia have struggled to have the remains of their direct ancestors repatriated from Germany for many years. In what was considered the first twentieth-century genocide, soldiers massacred thousands of Indigenous Herero and Nama in response to revolts against German land seizures between 1904-1908. The remains of

spearheading a programme to return Māori human remains home from collections abroad. Some Māori groups, having now satisfied their quest to reconcile lost connections with the land and ancestral human remains, have moved on to claims for significant *taonga Māori* (cultural objects) to help strengthen community identities.

⁴⁷ Laura Peers, 'Repatriation – a gain for science?', *Anthropology Today*, 20 (2004), 3-4.

⁴⁸ Jane Hubert and Cressida Fforde, 'Introduction: the reburial issue in the twenty-first century', in *The Dead and their Possessions Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice*, ed. by Cressida Fforde, Jane Hubert, Paul Turnbull (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

the massacred were taken to German universities, hospitals, and museums, and were subjected to racial experimentation to support theories of white superiority.⁴⁹ In 2018, the third repatriation of these remains to Namibia from Germany occurred, with the possibility that more unknown remains still exist in the country.

In 1995, The Griqua National Conference (GNC) began to petition for the return of the remains of their Khoikhoi ancestor Saartjie Baartman, or Sara, from Paris. Baartman had been exhibited nude at the Musée de l'Homme as the 'Hottentot Venus', where audiences would pay to see and touch her body. The exact date of her death is not known but thought to have been in 1815 or 1816. Her remains stayed in Paris until the South African government's negotiations with France enabled her return for reburial in 2002.⁵⁰ Mansell Upham, as the Griqua representative at the UN's Working Group of Indigenous Populations in 1996, emphasised that the GNC were frustrated by the process of return for Baartman's remains, and their endeavour was entangled in a conscious effort to attain:

Recognition of aboriginality; representation at all levels of government; traditional leadership-status; the restitution of flagrantly violated treaties; the return of all GRIQUA land usurped by colonial powers but now inherited illegally by the nation-state of South Africa and; compensation for untold suffering, genocide and ethnocide inflicted on the GRIQUA and their KHOISAN ancestors as culturally, linguistically, socially, economically and politically deprived, disempowered and almost decimated aboriginal, autochthonous and indigenous people of southern Africa.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Vilho Amukwaya Shigwedha, 'The return of Herero and Nama bones from Germany: the victims' struggle for recognition and recurring genocide memories in Namibia', in *Human Remains in Society Book Subtitle: Curation and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Genocide and Mass-violence*, ed. by Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Élisabeth Anstett (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 197-219.

⁵⁰ Karen Harvey, 'Baartman, Sara', in *ODNB* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/73573>> [accessed 9 August 2021].

⁵¹ Mansell Upham, 'Review of Developments Pertaining to the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People', United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Populations, 14th session, July 1996
<<http://cendoc.docip.org/collect/cendocdo/index/assoc/HASH0130/189c5f2e.dir/960307.pdf>> [accessed 11 June 2021] (para. 8 of 17).

The national politics of South Africa determined that Griqua communities were not Indigenous but instead 'Coloureds', which removed them from governmental decision making around their cultural heritage.⁵² Griqua communities have continued to position their identity within an international Indigenous rights framework, in opposition to the idea that their racial identification is correctly aligned within the politics of a post-apartheid South Africa.

Political recognition of identity as a way to take up state resources and control historic narratives is inextricably linked with aspects of decolonisation through heritage. The current politico-legal landscape imprints special rights and considerations for communities based on indigeneity as an identity of alterity and difference from colonising nations. But this framework means that some aspects of British colonial expansion and imperialism fall into the cracks of identity politics and globalisation.

Country-based restitution claims that sit outside of Indigenous rights issues, such as Ethiopia's request for the return of royal and religious art from Maqdala by the British army in 1867, continue to find little traction in the UK.⁵³ That is partly about the legal restrictions around collections held in national repositories, but there is also a lack of recognition that an Indigenous model of alterity as the antithesis of western identity does not work for conversations about colonial spoilage for collections taken through military looting and plunder campaigns across the Africa and Asia.⁵⁴ Despite this lack of attention to collections taken by force in museums, as early as 1871 Parliamentary discussions about military prize payment for the removal of Tewodros II's crown and chalice from Maqdala questioned the relevance and need for their extraction. Prime

⁵² In South Africa, 'Coloured' was used by the apartheid government to define one of four main racial groups (the others being 'black', 'white' and 'Indian'). Like the other terms, it artificially grouped people of diverse heritage, in this case African, European and Asian. The term still exists but is heavily contested and left to individuals to self-define.

⁵³ In 1862 Emperor Tewodros II of Ethiopia asked the British government for an alliance and assistance in gaining weapons. After his request went unanswered, he ordered the capture of a group of Europeans, including the British consul. In response, the British mounted an attack on the Emperor's fortress at Maqdala in 1868, resulting in the Emperor committing suicide, the capture of his son and wife, and the looting of royal and treasures by the British from the fortress for sale back to Great Britain. The Ethiopian government has made an official request for the return of the Maqdala treasures from the UK and the request is currently open.

⁵⁴ Hicks, p. 24.

Minister Gladstone acknowledged the importance of these 'sacred and imposing symbols' to the Abyssinians, and it was emphasized that Lord Napier, who led the punitive mission, thought the items 'ought to be held in deposit till they could be returned to Abyssinia'.⁵⁵

Repatriation discussions within the heritage sector have traditionally been over-reliant on indigeneity as a framework for understanding and acquiescing to group rights to representation or ownership. This has been a necessary framework, especially in terms of recognition in the UK which sits outside of the settler nations where these issues are present within one's own backyard. Museums have increasingly acknowledged the need for practices that include the voices of wider non-white audiences and marginalised communities whose collections have traditionally been on display, but whose voices have historically been silenced. If we can agree that the museum plays a role in cultural governance and reinforcing national histories, then the marked absence of histories of the enslaved and their descendants, or many other communities of colour underrepresented within heritage narratives, implicitly denies their significance to a country's national story.⁵⁶

The US and the UK have the integrated populations of Black, Asian, and people of colour whose migration, forced or elected, became part of a system of imperial power as well as of the history of these nations. Our indigeneity has been subsumed as we were made citizens of new nation-states. The arguments of authentic and separate cultural identities are no longer afforded to us as our histories, and any injustices that accompanied our integration into the nation, have become an ignored fallout of colonialism and historic slavery. The absence of our perspectives from the AHD in heritage has created an institutionalised invisibility despite the presence of relevant collections in holding institutions.

Repatriation issues are subsets of the larger picture of control sought over language; education; historic narratives; the return of lands for Indigenous communities; as well as the reparations debate for injustices of historic slavery in the US and the Caribbean; or colonial sanctioned genocide and loss of life in places like

⁵⁵ *Hansard*, vol. 207, 30 June 1871<<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1871/jun/30/motion-for-an-address>> [accessed 29 July 2021].

⁵⁶ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 21; L. Smith 2006, p. 197.

Namibia.⁵⁷ The ability to control symbolic or hereditary heritage continues to be an important part of political negotiations of legitimacy.⁵⁸ Colonialism and racism are intertwined, and there is still so much work to do to redress historic injustices.

KEY PRACTICES OF DECOLONISATION AND ANTI-RACISM, IN SUMMARY

The absence of Black community representation in heritage has long been critiqued through contemporary art and social activism. The prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK rightly focused on the public monuments and art of the nation. We have been celebrating the intrinsic value of public statuary for so long, that we have ignored the violent histories connected to the figures represented and events commemorated. As sanctioned monuments to national history, we have also forgotten to question the intentionality behind the creation of the public statuary that surrounds us. Neglecting to question the rationale behind symbols and the histories we tell distances us from the people affected by colonisation – whether through time, physical distance, or the clouded nostalgia of a sanitised history – and this distancing has real consequences.

The statue of Tory statesman Henry Dundas was erected in Edinburgh between 1821 and 1823 in a post-Union era of British history when commemorative statues were created to promote cultural nationalism.⁵⁹ Even at the time of the monument's construction, Dundas was an unpopular figure who introduced 'gradual' instead of 'immediate' abolition to William Wilberforce's 1792 motion to abolish slavery and was impeached for the misuse of naval funds. Dundas' movement of gradual abolition was not a humanitarian effort, nor did it acknowledge the people affected by slavery as equals deserving their freedom. Instead, the abolition position was mainly concerned with economic prosperity and trade for Britain. Continued over-simplification and sanitisation of the abolition narrative allays the direct responsibility of the British nation

⁵⁷ In June 2021, Germany officially apologised and pledged €1.1 billion to Namibia in reparations for the colonial genocide in Namibia.

⁵⁸ L. Smith, p. 295.

⁵⁹ Clarisse Godard Desmarest, 'The Melville Monument and the Shaping of the Scottish Metropolis', *Architectural History*, 61 (2018), 105-130 (p. 105, p. 125).

in the slave trade, and very infrequently looks at the prolonged consequences on the lives of enslaved individuals.

Heritage organisations with a focus on caring for places and collections have begun to consult with the full diversity of people and communities they claim to represent. This consultation practice with key audiences is often glossed as community engagement work or collaboration, but it is important to recognise that the groups are often communities of colour because we have historically not included their perspectives or personal understandings of collections' significance. Decolonising practice means more than sourcing valuable information about lived experience from volunteer community groups. It requires sharing power and inviting communities to speak for themselves through diverse interpretation, revealing how multiple perspectives can co-exist. It is also vital that people providing the expertise and generosity of their knowledge are renumerated. We cannot fall into another exploitative situation by failing to acknowledge the power and impact behind harvesting the intellectual and emotional labour of communities of colour.

Also related to the legacies of racism is the continued lack of diversity that affects the heritage workforce and the makeup of our audiences. But diversification is not the same as decolonisation. Diversification is about understanding the requirement for diverse perspectives and opinions in the workplace so that no one must stand as the lone spokesperson for their identity, which inevitably leads to emotional exhaustion.

The heritage sector has been aware of the call for decolonisation for so many years, that even the idea of writing an article about decolonisation seemed redundant. However, I would say two key things have been illuminated to me through writing this piece. All work to communicate history is inherently partial, subject to the biases of those involved in the process of writing it, presenting it, or remembering it. No presentation of history will be free of contestation. But accepting the inevitable contestation is partly about how the heritage machine works. Negotiating between views, consensus building, and managing change is a taxing commitment that must be mediated as an understanding of the changing world around us.

I have also come to realise that the repercussions of colonialism are so widespread and deep that it is easy to lose sight of what needs to be addressed. Decolonisation is a practice without a finale. A refreshed demand for greater representation and for organisations to become anti-racist raises the bar of expectation

that requires those in the field to challenge their personal experiences, education, and perceptions, particularly around racism. Anti-racism does not displace the need for decolonial practices. It is an important call to action as a focused way of understanding that racism is a socially constructed inequality that has been reinforced by colonialism, and it is not solely the product of colonialism. This means that negotiating representations of identity through heritage has value for affecting the normative ways of thinking about whose history is communicated and examining the power dynamics that have inhibited more inclusive perspectives. History and heritage will continue to be contested. In order to move beyond traditional historic narratives, it becomes incumbent on heritage institutions to recognise the value of the diverse groups and communities who challenge us. This effort will help us re-inscribe marginalised histories and awareness into our heritage practice.



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