



‘The museum is changing’: activating the power of participatory research in the university museum

Dr Kate Noble
Senior Research Associate

The
Fitzwilliam
Museum
CAMBRIDGE



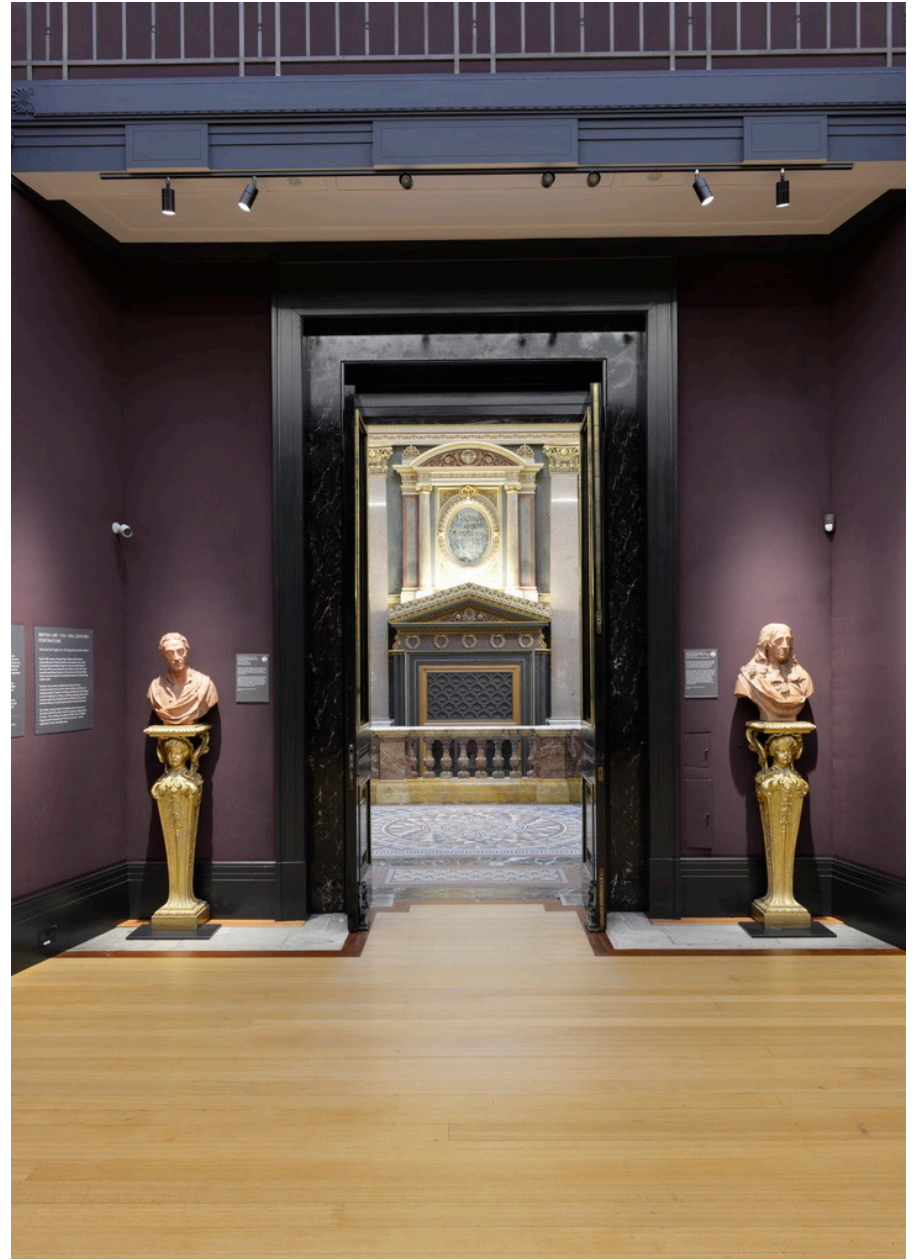


Our diverse collections and audiences inspire our research, and we aim to ensure that our research **inspires, involves and benefits those audiences.**

Our staff will draw upon both deep knowledge of, and diverse perspectives on, art and material culture to make a difference through innovative and relevant research. Our research will help us to explore the myriad ways in which art and culture touch people's lives, working with our audiences to develop knowledge, skills, agency and a sense of belonging, as well as enhancing health and wellbeing.

The Fitzwilliam Museum. Research and Impact Strategy, 2021-4







‘Envisioning a future of global peace and justice, we must all realize that **collaboration is the practice that will most effectively enable everyone to dialogue together**, to create a new language of community and mutual partnership.’

bell hooks. Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom, 2009: 41

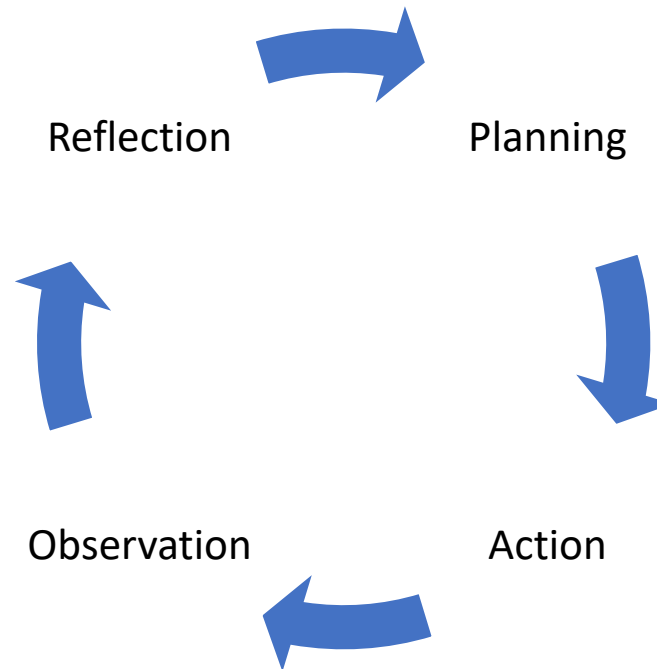
‘Research as an **inclusive process of enquiry** undertaken by practitioners working alongside academic and non-academic researchers within an **open and exploratory** environment where **expertise is valued non- hierarchically.**’

Emily Pringle. Rethinking Research in the Art Museum, 2020: 163



Action Research Cycle

Adapted from MacNaughton and Hughes, 2009, McNiff, 2017



'reflection- true reflection- leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that **action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection.**'

Paulo Freire. Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1970: 40



Tensions of Belonging

Connecting Cambridge

Project Team: David Farrell-Banks; Nadine Langford; Jake Millar; Kate Noble;
Molly Stock-Duerdoth; Ruth Clarke; Helen Ritchie
Anasuya, Isaac, Jade, Jacqui, Kath, Rick, Rob, Sue, Susan and Tim

With thanks to: Habda Rashid; Miranda Stearn

‘It’s about the democratisation of museums, breaking down the system. **The museum is changing**, involving people, local people.’

*Susan. Connections Group
Member, 2023*





**Stand for fruit and sweet treats
know as an epergne 1759-60**

Made by Emick Romer, a Norwegian
silversmith working in London

This solid silver stand has a large oval bowl in the centre for displaying a range of fruit. Four smaller round bowls branch out from the sides to show off prized individual fruits or expensive sweet treats.

Silver

C. B. Marlay Bequest, 1912. MAR.M.19 & a-i-191

This design conjures up a tree with branches bearing different fruit and is all about showing off wealth. An **epergne** like this may have graced the top tables of Cambridge colleges, and was perhaps filled with desserts made by and fruit picked by people from outside the city who lived poorer, more humble lives. It sums up an economic divide that is still felt in Cambridgeshire.

Issac



Candy Lady 2020

Made by Shawanda Corbett

This pair of tall, undulating vessels were made on a potter's wheel and are painted with shimmering gold lustre and swirling abstract patterns. One vessel is mainly painted brown the other is painted blue, pink and white.

Two vessels, stoneware, thrown on a potter's wheel and painted
Acquired with the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum Fund, 2020.
C.26-2020; C.27-2020

At first I misunderstood these works, then I watched some films about the artist, Shawanda Corbett. In one, as part of an art performance, she does a dynamic, swirling dance which is extraordinary because she has no legs and only one arm. As an artist with motor neurone disease, trapped in a failing body, whenever I struggle with my own work, I think of all obstacles she has overcome.

Rick

Jade

‘The Connections project feels like a welcome step by the Fitzwilliam to **bring in community members to help break down the many barriers** that can prevent people from accessing Cambridge's museums and art institutions.’

Sue

‘I think [what excites me] is the **opportunity to have a voice and create a little bit of anarchy** ... I’m passionate about storytelling. For me, it’s about, ‘where’s the story in this?’ and I’m passionate about **people being able to connect with what they see.**’

References

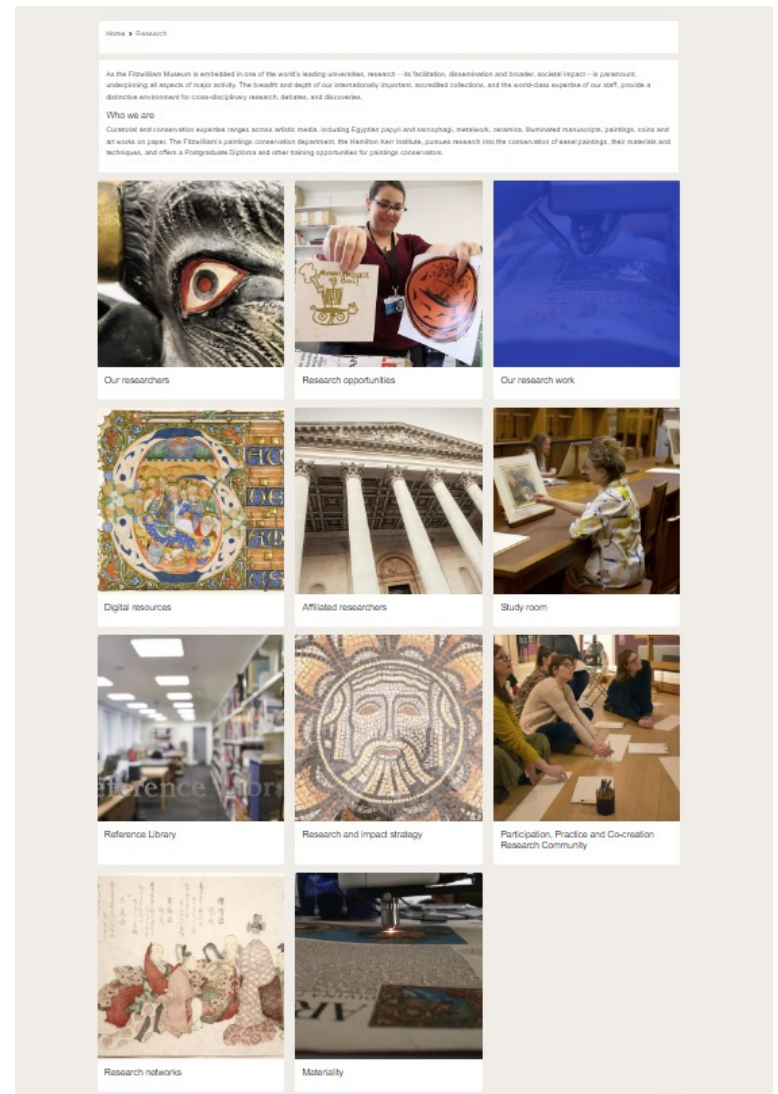
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Discover our research

Home » Research

As the Fitzwilliam Museum is embedded in one of the world's leading universities, research – its facilitation, dissemination and broader societal impact – is paramount, underpinning all aspects of major activity. The breadth and depth of our internationally important, accredited collections, and the world-class expertise of our staff, provide a distinctive environment for cross-disciplinary research, debate, and discovery.

Who we are
Curatorial and conservation expertise ranges across artistic media, including Egyptian papyri and cartonnage, metalwork, ceramics, illuminated manuscripts, paintings, coins and art works on paper. The Fitzwilliam's paintings conservation department, the Hamilton Kerr Institute, pursues research into the conservation of these paintings, their materials and techniques, and offers a Postgraduate Diploma and other training opportunities for paintings conservation.



Our researchers

Research opportunities

Our research work

Digital resources

Affiliated researchers

Study room

Reference Library

Research and impact strategy

Participation, Practice and Co-creation Research Community

Research networks

Materiality

Kate Noble kjr21@cam.ac.uk

<https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/research>