

Report - MA Conference 2019, Brighton

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There are so many wonderful things about being an ITP fellow. One of the most beautiful parts is they make you a lifelong member of the ITP group. The programme doesn't just provide one opportunity, but it keeps on offering more opportunities that could help ITP fellows in their professional careers. Without the continuous support of the donors this would not have possible and I would like to thank Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust for their generous support. I would also like to sincerely thank Claire Messenger and her team at the British Museum for planning and organising this trip for me to attend the museum conference in Brighton. I closely follow the ITP social media and I keep seeing all these different calls for the ITP fellows. I found that the Museum Association Conference was quite relevant to me as it matched my interests, and I realised that it would also help me to understand a bit more about the global topics in museum practice. I was very happy that when I found out that I was selected to attend the 2019 MA Conference in Brighton. I knew that I was going to be involved in a dialogue that I never experienced in my whole museum career.

First of all, I would like mention that the programme structure was designed perfectly. There was a free day, which allowed me to reconnect with the British Museum's collection and meet some of the members I met before. There was also some time to go and see some of the fabulous exhibitions that were on at that time in London. After travelling to Brighton there was two days before the conference started. In these two days the ITP wonderfully planned and organised visits to two new destinations in Brighton. It would have been not much fun to attend the conference for two days only and return back without these additional days and visits. A week long carefully planned trip was just the icing on the cake.

Before attending the MA Conference on the first day in London, my first destination had to be the British Museum. It was a bond that I created last year and it dragged me there. The Great Court was the same, but now not having the ITP fellows by the information desk, it kind of felt weird to me being on my own. I am doing some research about Nepali objects therefore I stopped by the Nepali section for some time. The whole day was there for me to go around the city and I wanted to go and see some of the solo shows that were happening in London. I was interested in looking at how the works and the artists' lives were interpreted in the galleries; I was very much interested to look at those exhibitions from the curatorial perspective. I spent a whole day at Tate Britain, I was so happy to see the work of William Blake. I must thank the ITP team for adding this self-guided tour day because this really allowed me to pick and choose what I wanted to see in London.



Weald and Downland Living Museum

Polesden Lacey

The next day, I travelled to Brighton with my ITP fellows. There were two days before the conference and we had two different visits lined up. I visited Weald and Downland Living Museum on day one in Brighton. The open air museum was like a spectacular architectural garden. I am so glad that our visit was planned there. I have never been to a museum like that, it was completely beyond my imagination as it was preserving and holding the stories of the people who lived and worked in rural South East England over the last 1,000 years. On day two we went to Polesden Lacey, its collection was just fabulous but was also completely in contrast to the houses and the living conditions that I observed at the Weald and Downland Museum. Both of these visits gave completely different inspirations and ideas. It also taught me how different museum collections could be; one had houses with old tools from the working class and poor families and the other was like a palace filled with luxury, gold and glitter and it was telling the stories of rich people.

The first day at the conference, was all about the auditorium and throughout the programme, it was the centre of the attraction. It had the most empowering and big topics such as climate issues, decolonisation, restitution, ethical responsibility, museum activism and democratising collections and museums. In fact, this was my first experience in such a conference and I was amazed and overwhelmed by the topics that were being discussed. Many of the topics would not even be considered as a museum topic in Nepal but I was exposed to these topics and I was bound to think about it in the context of the Nepali



museum scenario. One of the most important and beneficial sessions I attended was from Microsoft “Empowering museums and libraries through the digital transformation”. It was really good to know about the initiatives and support Microsoft was offering. I think in an underdeveloped country like Nepal, this session was an eye opener.

I like motivational speakers and I believe in causes that directly impacts the community so I loved the speeches and talk by Farhana Yamin, Clayton Thomas Müller and Ahdaf Soueif. On the opening day, the keynote by Sharon Heal was wonderful and she was talking about our ethical responsibility, climate change and rising issues we have currently in our society and in museum practice. One of my main intentions at the conference was to network with the right people who can advise and support my institution and projects I am involved in. Based on this idea I was picking the sessions I wanted to attend. I was really keen to participate in the sessions about climate, sustainability, environment and sessions about ethical issues. Through these sessions I was also able to do some networking which was quite beneficial. It was really encouraging to hear about the #MeToo movement and post-colonial museums. Being ethical was a one of the priorities in the conference and in terms of the climate, environment and sustainability, the conference really provided a great learning experience and it was also very stimulating. In Nepal we were never involved in such debate within the museum environment or outside. In fact we don’t even care about it because we do not have such codes or guidelines. Now, after coming back from this conference, it has made me think, react and action my work responsibly. In Nepal we are much behind as we have not been able to think and initiate these topics and dialogues. I would definitely like to initiate and discuss similar topics with Nepal Museum

Association and ICOM Nepal so that we could also get ourselves engaged in such conversations and be more critical about the impact we could make in the future through museums. The conference taught me; “as a museum we serve the people and as an institution, we should also serve responsibly by being kind to people, by being sustainable, by caring for the environment, by proving ourselves ethical, by respecting and understanding the culture, history and values of other countries and communities. It is not just one individual’s or institution’s role, as a museum professional it is our duty to CHANGE and have a more meaningful profession”.

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