

# **ITP final report**

Submitted by

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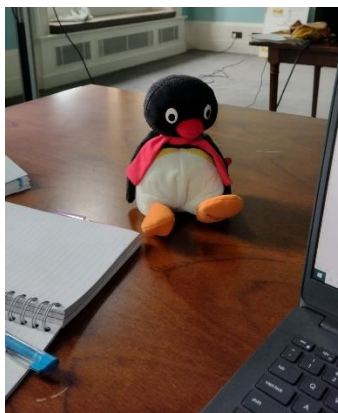
**India**

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I have been working as Museum Keeper in Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad (Gujarat, India) since 2018. At present, I lead the ‘Outreach and Educational Activities’ programme at the Museum. My job made me realize the necessity to make art accessible to various communities and also the challenges towards achieving that goal. Our continuous effort is to make the museum interactive and relevant to all kinds of audiences. Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum takes pride in its rich collection of Indian art, representing cultures and ethnicities spread throughout the sub-continent. It is best known for some of its prominent collections on Jain Art, especially from Western Indian. The Museum’s vision is to reach the local community and simultaneously step into the global realm. At this stage, when the museum is gradually moving forward, my participation in the British Museum’s International Training Programme was able to help me to work concretely towards our museum’s vision.

For me, it was my first trip abroad. The experience of visiting the UK and participating in this training programme will be remembered and cherished throughout my life. The ITP e-Learning sessions prior to the onsite programme was beneficial to give a brief overview of the programme. The onsite sessions came with fun, interactive learning and many surprises. I am very thankful to the entire ITP team (Claire, Anna and George) for designing such a detailed programme which was worthy not only for professional purposes but also for personal evolvment. I enjoyed this journey thoroughly with the other ITP fellows.

On the first week of the programme, we started getting familiar with the British Museum (BM) and its departments. During the ‘Objects in focus trail workshop’ I interpreted an object which has nothing to do with my museum collection. This exercise was a major ice breaker for me as I have dealt with mostly ‘Art’ objects so far. The process initiated a very simple way to interact with the object. My interpretation was focused on the object and there was an attempt to make it speak. This experience was one of the key ones which guided me throughout my ITP journey.



My object in ‘Objects in focus trail workshop’

Room 33, The Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia was like a pilgrim site for me, especially the South Asian section. I remember spending a decent amount of time there, multiple times, looking at each object. As I am also responsible for such a collection at our museum, it was a fabulous experience to observe the display and curation first-hand. Discussions with the curators of the Asia department have provided me solutions to various challenges regarding 'collection management', 'documentation' and 'collection care', which are relevant to my working space and can be implemented at our museum. An opportunity to see some of the masterpieces of Indian miniature paintings from the BM's reserve collection was indeed precious. 'Feminine power: the divine to the demonic' and 'Shattered glass of Beirut' are the two pathbreaking temporary exhibitions I witnessed during my ITP days at the BM and I was also hugely inspired by the sessions with the curators discussing ideas and logistics behind the scenes.



At The Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia, British Museum



Emily Hannam, Project Curator: South Asia in the Department of Asia showing some of the masterpieces of Indian miniature paintings from the BM's reserve collection

We experienced a variety of museums, both in and outside of London. I learned more about how various museums function and how each has its unique personality. Visiting many special curated exhibitions, discussing the layers of curatorial thought process including target audiences, strategies of promotion and digital outreach was very relevant for a museum professional like me who endeavors to make the museum collection accessible to wider audiences.

In my visit to Oxford and Cambridge I tried to understand the nuances of university museums and how they differ. I adopted much wider ideas about 'collection reserve stores' during the visit to the Centre for Material Culture which is in the process of being set up through the Museum of Archeology and Anthropology in Cambridge. It was one of the major highlights of the Cambridge visit.



COLOUR: Art, Science and Power, exhibition at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

I had a compulsion to visit some prominent museums in London during my free time and I realised how I started interacting differently with the museum spaces. Here, I should highlight my visit to the British Library, where I went specifically to study the display as the majority of the collection of our institution are manuscripts and paintings on paper. I am already in a process of sharing those ideas with my colleagues. The programme sessions focused on current issues in the cultural and heritage sector, which I personally haven't explored so far. Here, I should specifically mention the presentations on 'repatriation' by Roshan Mishra, Director, Taragaon Museum (Nepal, ITP Fellow 2018 & Senior Fellow 2022) and Julie Adams, Curator: Oceania, Africa Oceania and the Americas, British Museum. Knowing about the past, present, and future of 'repatriation' was very new for me. It has initiated an alternative perspective and I am so moved by this that now whenever I get an opportunity, I try to share this knowledge with colleagues and friends. The sessions on 'risk management and internal audit' and 'sustainability' were equally beneficial.

After spending two weeks in London, I travelled to Glasgow. Me, Yanoa and Eneida (two other ITP fellows from South America) spent a week with Glasgow Museums (UK Partner Museum). This added another dimension to my ITP journey. It was an opportunity to experience how regional museums work. I would like to thank Patricia Allan, Curator of World Cultures, Glasgow Museums and Ed Johnson, Curator of Medieval and Renaissance Art, The Burrell Collection, for making our visit fruitful in every possible way. Glasgow is a port city on the River Clyde in Scotland's western Lowlands. One of my first interactions with the city happened through a hording that said, 'People Make Glasgow'. I initially did not know what it was about, but it explained the essence of the city to me. It was interesting to observe how Glasgow Museums plays a vital role in the upbringing of Glasgow life. It was an opportunity to experience the regional museums and their various methods of governance and funding. I was mesmerized by the different creative mediums which they have developed over the years, not only to make the collection accessible to the community, but also to make museum spaces a forum of interaction. I learned that digital media is not the only media through which the museum can be made interactive. The correct choice of display objects, correct use of

interpretation and display labels can also make a space interactive. I was inspired by the curation of the museums which reflect care not only for the objects, but also for the visitors.



Curated corner at the Riverside Museum, Glasgow

We spent quite a large amount of time in Glasgow Museum Resource Centre which houses the majority of the collection of Glasgow Museums. It was beneficial to have several discussions about community engagement with the members of Glasgow Museums' outreach team (The Open Museum). Three of us began working on a mini-exhibition on the theme of 'Journeys' for the Open Museum with the help of the curators. The exhibition is still in process.



Glimpse of the objects for a mini-exhibition, The Open Museum, Glasgow

After the four productive weeks, I travelled back to my country with a fresh outlook and lots of ideas which I want to implement in our institution. Some of them I've already started implementing. My goal as a museum professional is to create an interactive space with empathy. However, the change will take time. During the ITP, I became aware of the value of risk assessment whilst planning for future changes. Perhaps, in this scenario the best strategy is 'quick wins' i.e. changes which can easily be made with little support and resources.





With the ITP fellows at Stonehenge

I spent one month with the ITP fellows from different corners of the world. It is a pretty long time and consciously/unconsciously we developed a bonding. We have been inspired by each other's ideas and have grown together. The respect and care I have received from each fellow is very precious to me. Hopefully we will meet again. It feels great to be a part of the ITP 'global network'. Now I can not only be updated about the scenarios of world museums and the heritage sector but also, eventually I will understand, whom to contact, if my institution or me faces a particular challenge. The ITP Facebook group and 'Friday email' are the two important platforms which are very helpful in keeping in touch with the news and the work of other ITP fellows. It is a continuous learning process. A churning mind is mandatory to produce new ideas and the ITP has given me that opportunity. I would be more than happy to associate myself with the legacy projects.

My soul, which is deeply rooted in art history, was beyond happy during my ITP journey as I had several opportunities to witness some of the masterpieces of world art history, which I had only seen as reproductions in art history books. While I was in Glasgow, I had the chance to see the seven Indian artefacts that are being repatriated from the UK.

I gained more confidence and clarity on my practice as a museum professional and also developed a fresh perspective to analyse my work space. This will be one of the milestones for my future endeavors. My place on the International Training Programme was generously supported by the Charles Wallace India Trust and Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to them for giving me an opportunity to experience the diverse world of the museum profession.