

# Elucidations

## Learning Resource



The Courtauld Gallery's world-renowned collection includes Old Masters, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, an outstanding prints and drawings collection and significant holdings of Medieval, Renaissance and Modern art. The Gallery is at the heart of The Courtauld Institute of Art, one of the world's leading centres for the study of the history and conservation of art and architecture.

The Courtauld Learning department offers an extensive programme of activities for primary and secondary schools, further education colleges, teachers and young people. Led by art historians and contemporary artists, our workshops and resources explore the Courtauld collection and the research carried out within the university.

#### LEARNING CONTACT INFORMATION

[courtauld.ac.uk/learn](https://www.courtauld.ac.uk/learn)

[education@courtauld.ac.uk](mailto:education@courtauld.ac.uk)

(0) 20 3947 7589

#### COVER IMAGE

Adam and Eve, 1526, LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER (1472-1553)

Oil on panel, 80.8 x 117.1 cm,

© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

## Introduction

The Courtauld is a specialist university and international centre of excellence for art history which combines teaching and research, conservation and curating. We are now in the midst of a major transformation project, Courtauld Connects, which will refurbish the Courtauld Gallery and create a new learning centre for schools, families, volunteers and community groups.

Our unique schools programme offers art, architecture and art history as a springboard for understanding visual culture and the development of research skills, critical analysis and articulacy across subjects as wide-ranging as creative writing, modern languages and maths.

The teachers' resources are generously supported by the Oak Foundation; this one has been created in partnership with art historians and contemporary artists and my thanks go to all those involved. We hope that the contents will serve as a rich source of ideas and inspiration for teachers and students.

**HENRIETTA HINE**, Head of Public Programmes  
(Supported by the Dr Michael and Anna Brynberg Charitable Foundation)

Inspired by The Courtauld Gallery collection, our new Learning Resource, Elucidations, cultivates active conversations that go beyond 'art as representation'. We have invited emerging artists and practitioners to respond to the artworks in the collection that excite them the most. Working in collaboration with art historians, curators, and academics they have generated a series of unique responses to the collection that provoke, challenge, and encourage dialogues about art and artists.

By viewing historic art through 21st century eyes, Elucidations foregrounds intersecting social identities and fosters new connections to ideas in contemporary culture. Encouraging self-expression and critical analysis, this resource nurtures the principles of the gallery's founder, Samuel Courtauld, whose aim was to put art at the heart of his vision for a fairer, more just society.

While art is always bound up in some way to the thought of its time, Elucidations underscores the enduring relevances and renewed significance of art and artists then and now.

**CAREY ROBINSON**, Learning and Outreach Manager

## Contents

Elucidations explores works from across The Courtauld Gallery, The Conway Library and The Courtauld Institute of Art. Cutting across genres, from painting and drawing to archives and conservation, this resource also showcases a pilot project for secondary schools aimed at enhancing oracy skills through art.

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Public Programmes run artist and art historian led workshops in schools and colleges, twilight events for teachers, and Insights Days throughout the academic year.

During the summer months we run a popular series of art history Short Courses, and a Summer University for young people aged 16-18.

Workshops in schools are free for eligible schools, and one month's advance booking is required. To book a workshop online and for more information

PLEASE VISIT:

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[education@courtauld.ac.uk](mailto:education@courtauld.ac.uk)

(0) 20 3947 7589





# Conversations in Galleries

— “I see, I notice, I wonder?”

Public Programmes worked with Eltham Hill School to design an oracy through art project for Year 9 students. Designed in collaboration with the school's Design and Creation Leader, Sarah Turner, a core aim of the project was to increase confidence in self-expression by speaking to a range of people across different settings and giving students a position and a voice to start sharing their own ideas around culture.

Over four sessions, each led by a different specialist, a Year 9 class undertook a gallery visit with writer and performance poet Francesca Beard, an introduction to arts programming with Learning Programme Manager Carey Robinson, curating and research practice with art historian Fran Herrick, and zine-making with illustrator Millie Knight. The project culminated in individual presentations about an artwork of their choosing for their peers and teachers, which they rehearsed as part of the project. The students who took part have decided to lead on a new school zine, which they have called Culture Inc. and give some feedback here:

- I learned that the history of art is not just about the artist.
- We learned to look at art in different way. It was amazing, and a great experience for me to have.
- I learned to see paintings from different concepts and multiple views, and to see the detail and analyse what is hidden.”

TL - ALLEGORICAL PORTRAIT OF SIR JOHN LUTTRELL, 1550, Hans Eworth (c. 1520-1574), Oil on panel, 109.3 x 83.8 cm

TR- PORTRAIT OF MRS GAINSBOROUGH, around 1778, Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), Oil on canvas, 76.7 x 63.8 cm

BL -PORTRAIT OF QUEEN CHARLOTTE, 1812, William Beechey (1753-1839), Oil on canvas, 239 x 147.5 cm

BR - ELIZABETH SIDDAL, SEATED AT AN EASEL, PAINTING, circa. 1854-55, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) Graphite, 17.7 x 11.8 cm

All images © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

## THE PROJECT

I wanted to pilot this project with Year 9 students because I was interested in looking at the impact on our learners' perspectives, and in particular, to see whether an oracy focused task incorporating art could be used to generate a shift in mindset for some of our more disadvantaged students and those with limited cultural capital.

The students selected are all GCSE Art students, the majority of whom are pupil premium, with 50% of students from a white British or Afro-Caribbean heritage. The majority of the students had visited a gallery with an education institution or during primary education, and some of the students had visited a gallery or museum with a grandparent or parent once before. However, the majority of students had limited experience.

I was keen to develop a better understanding of how increased cultural capital impacts student learning, with a focus on how learning key skills benefits talking about art. How might a project such as this help students to build confidence in their own ability to explore dialogic learning? How might this sort of learning experience enhance the students' ability to be independent inquirers, and their focus in relation to investigative research?

Conversations in Galleries has impacted positively on the majority of the students involved. Participation in the project encouraged students to be confident in their own opinions, empowering them to create a school zine called Culture Inc., which they will be leading on in the next academic year. The project could be scaled up digitally - an online platform, for example, where schools could explore art from across The Courtauld collection and create responses via a monthly zine with a theme led by feeder schools. A platform such as this could develop high expectations for the students participating, and give them an opportunity to share work across a wider community.

SARAH TURNER Leader, Design & Creation, Eltham Hill School.





"It's like a fantasy concept of life"

"This shows a different realm"

"It's an allegory"

"what's an allegory?"

"A story (with hidden meaning)"

"It's not an aggressive fist - It's a peaceful one. The woman has wrapped her hand around his arm"

"She looks quite straight-faced"

"Because her husband painted her - maybe she might actually not feel like being in a painting"

"Her clothing is dark with a bit of gold and white - but it's not quite white - so does that mean she's not fully pure?"

"what's pure clothing?"

"Lots of white - high maintenance"

"How can you say one colour's pure and another colour's not?"



"At first I just saw the woman, Queen Charlotte holding the dog and I thought, oh, cute"

"This represents wealthy and powerful people"

"But even if you're rich you can still have despair and a bit of evil in you"

"Who is Queen Charlotte?"

"She's a German princess who did not really know her future husband"

"Why has she shut her eyes?"

"I think she's thinking - maybe she's trying to picture what she's going to draw or paint"

"It might be about procrastination. You know, like, say you want to do your homework you might get everything set up but not start it"

"It's like me and art homework I can't be pressured into doing it"

"With art you just need to let it flow..."





Collage by KAI-ISIAIAH JAMAL and TOYA WALKER, with photo of HENRY THOMAS  
 © The De Laszlo Collection of Paul Laib negatives, The Witt Library.

# Conway Library

— Place, Memory, Identity

The Courtauld's Conway Library is a collection of almost one million photographs of architecture, sculpture, manuscripts and decorative arts. A walk through the library's red archival boxes retraces, quite literally, the photographic expeditions made by its founder Martin Conway: art critic, politician, map maker and celebrated mountaineer.

Along with Anthony Kersting's archive of over 160,000 images documenting the architecture of almost every European country, Asia, New Zealand, the Middle and Far East and The De Laszlo Collection of Paul Laib Negatives which comprises over 20,000 glass plates depicting works by many of the major artists working in Britain between 1900 and 1945, it is currently being digitized by a team of over 500 volunteers.

Kai-Isaiah Jamal is a spoken word poet, writer, and trans-visibility activist. We invited him to spend a day in the Conway Library with Head of Digital Media Tom Bilson, and illustrator Toya Walker. With conversations ranging from Jamal's childhood in Jamaica to Bilson's extensive archival research, they exchanged ideas about buried histories, unheard voices, and the political economy of knowledge, beautifully rendered by Walker's illustrations in real time.

Through a process of dialogic learning and shared practice, they have produced a collaborative psycho-geography a rich collage of influences connecting place, history and identity that registers the intersections of desire, love, politics and boundaries.

**Portrait head of a man BOY WHO LOOK LIKE MY BOY**  
 ALL DA BOYS BE SPROUTIN. ALL OF DEM GOT BEARDS.  
 PATCHES THAT  
 GROW LIKE ISLANDS IN A SEA OF SKIN.  
 I NEVER KNOWN A IMAGE LIKE THIS. IN A GALLERY. THE  
 LIKENESS TO KOJEY.  
 THE WAY –  
 I'VE KNOWN A FACE LIKE THIS.  
 BUT NEVER A CELEBRATION OF A FACE LIKE THIS.

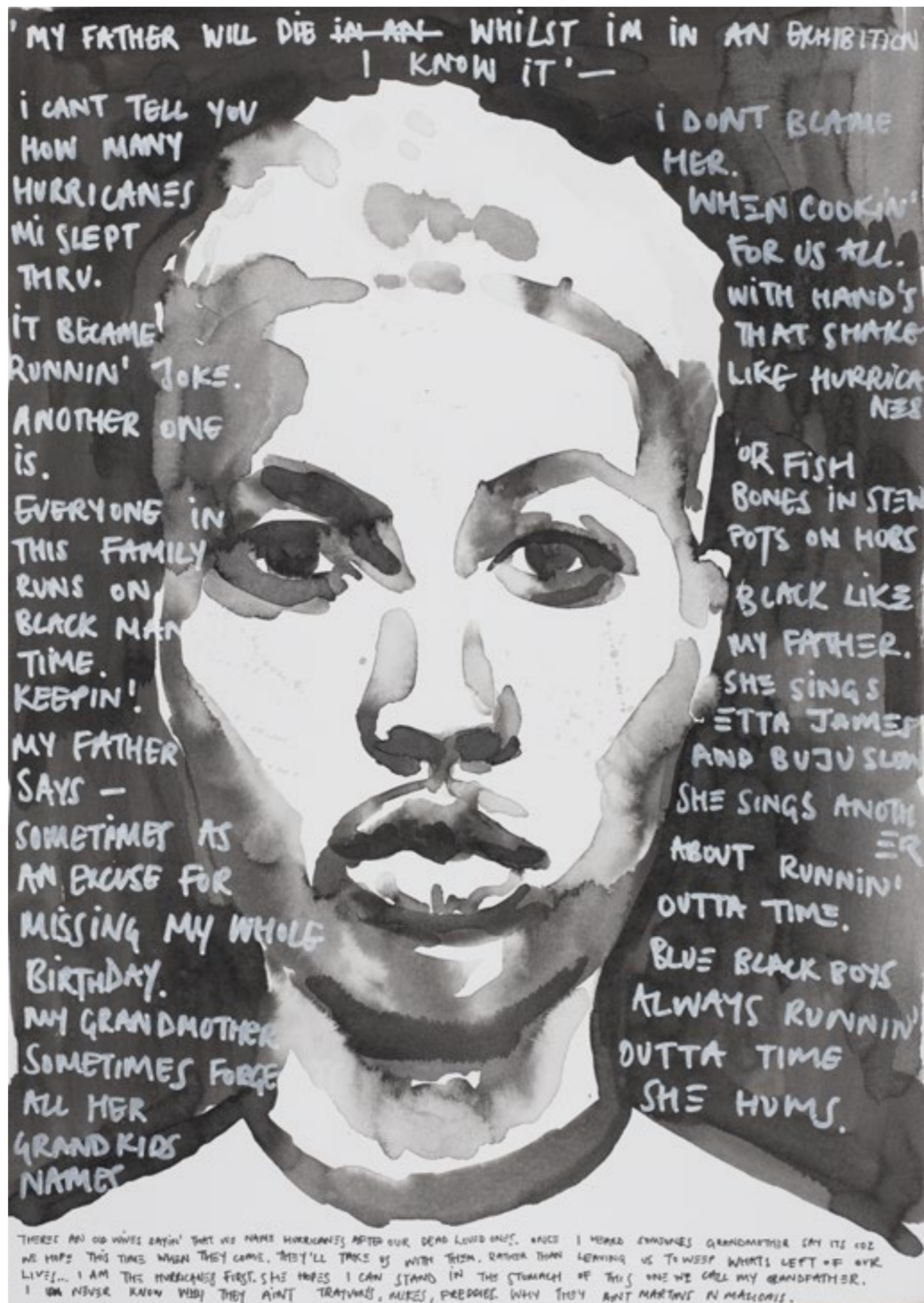
SERVING AND SERVING.  
 SERVING REALNESS.

BACK DROPS ARE  
 NOT BLACK  
 FACES. I AM  
 THE  
 DARK  
 THAT ALLOWS  
 THE LIGHT TO  
 EXIST

I ask for  
 no gods  
 no masters  
 no cops  
 no borders  
 no gods  
 no masters  
  
 more dykes  
 more noise  
 more dark  
 more noses that look like my father's  
 more lips  
 more queers  
 more art  
 more  
 more  
 more  
 for us.

Poems by KAI-ISIAIAH JAMAL





Watercolour sketch of KAI ISIAH-JAMAL, by TOYA WALKER



### QUESTIONS

In 1955, the Marxist theorist Guy Debord invented the term psychogeography to describe how different places make us feel and behave. When places you are familiar with change, how do your feelings about the place change?

Kai-Isaiah Jamal spent his early childhood in Jamaica. What is your earliest memory of place? What is your overriding emotion associated with that place?

Some of Jamal's poems explore how language is used to censor both queer and black identities. Language, identity and cultural difference are interrelated. How do you think identity influences the language you use to express yourself?

Do you change your language depending on where you are or who you're with?

Collage by KAI-ISIAIH JAMAL and TOYA WALKER, with photo of GLYN WARREN PHILPOT and HENRY THOMAS © The De Laszlo Collection of Paul Laib negatives, The Witt Library.

Glyn Philpot was introduced to Jamaican Henry Thomas in England in 1929. Thomas became Philpot's companion and attendant until Philpot's death in 1937. How do you think interpersonal relationships affect the way you feel about a place?

### LINK:

[www.instagram.com/kai\\_isaiah\\_jamal/](https://www.instagram.com/kai_isaiah_jamal/)

As a TPOC (Trans Person of Colour), Kai-Isaiah Jamal's work predominately explores societal pressures, injustice, and forms of love, particularly in relation to the social construction of gender categories, masculinity, and blackness (queer blackness).



# Sculpture and Decorative Objects

## — Illuminating Objects

Illuminating Objects is a collaborative internship offered to post graduates enrolled in a UK university in fields other than the history of art. It is a competitive, paid internship culminating in a three to five-month display of the intern's selected object in the Courtauld Gallery. Alice Hellard, Courtauld Connects Regional Learning and Heritage Officer, taught D&T in London secondary schools for almost 10 years. She talks to student and Illuminating Objects intern, Katrina Brain and founder of startup Design for Disability, Jess Ryan-Ndegwa, about A Painted Ivory Marriage Casket.

**ALICE HELLARD:**

**Tell me a little bit about what you each do.**

**KATRINA BRAIN:** I'm doing a Masters in Science Communication at Imperial College. My BA was in Knowledge Integration – Chemistry and Collaborative Design. I'm from a small community in northern Canada called Timmins. I came over from there in September 2018 to start the MA.

**JESS RYAN-NDEGWA:** I'm a Product & Furniture Design graduate. I finished a three-year design degree course at Kingston University in 2015. I've now got a business called Design for Disability, which looks at redesigning traditional or conventional medical aids into more bespoke and user-friendly products.

**AH: What drew you to the Ivory Marriage Casket and the Illuminating Objects project?**

**KB:** I don't have an art history background at all, which is why my approach to this object has been less conventional, not steeped in art history. What drew me to the ivory casket in the first place is the fact that the decorative animals displayed around the casket are from all over the world. This casket was made in around 1600 so I wanted to know how they knew about all these different animals in 1600, and especially in a tiny little town in Germany, Augsburg, where it was made.

**JRN:** First of all, I loved the idea of visiting the precious ivory casket in the Courtauld's store facility – which was incredible. That was such an interesting experience in itself, the store. I was born with a physical disability and take an inclusive approach to design. So this project is really fascinating for me, because I'm interested in where my thinking about inclusive design, in terms of closely examining how a product can be tailored, bespoke, and personalised in order to make it accessible to the user, can be applied to this historic ivory marriage casket.

**AH: What have you discovered about the casket?**

**KB:** The ivory casket came into The Courtauld collection from Thomas Gambier Parry, who bought it in the late 1800's. He thought the Great Elector of Brandenburg had owned it. We think the designer's name is Baumgartner; there was a German father and son who made various things like this. It is likely that several different craftsmen were involved, in the ivory veneering and wooden inlay, for example.

We had a heraldry expert re-identify the crests on the casket. And there have been some mistakes made, I think, in the original evaluation which would have been possibly in the 1960's. So obviously now with reverse image searches and things like that, there's a lot more that we can do in terms of finding the detail and finding the archives to really thoroughly research the crests. That was a funny part of my research actually, because it's not something that I was initially putting a lot of emphasis on – the people. I was so focused on asking, what does this show us about science and the technological developments that were happening at the time; yet one of the biggest things that came out of my project was the narrative of the people behind it. If the casket is displayed in the future, this is one of the most significant things that I will have contributed which is a funny thing!

**AH: So the ivory casket is an example of bespoke, one-off design, and it creates a sense of exclusivity in terms of its symbolism of status and wealth. Jess, can you tell us about your own approach to design?**

**JRN:** Particularly when I was younger, I struggled to fasten my own buttons. I'd had numerous consultations and one-to-ones with medical therapists, who issued these medical aids. And products within the medical field tend to be very medical looking. If asked to describe an NHS button hook aid, for example, you might struggle to explain what it would be used for just by looking at it. But you'd sense that it was designed to be functional, rather than aesthetic.

For instance, I was given a very large and unwieldy button hook with no obvious purpose. It's very noticeable. It's not something anyone wants to be carrying around really, having to whip out a giant tool to do up your coat! With any product, the user doesn't want to feel stigmatised or feel uncomfortable using it because the product is unattractive and draws attention to them.

When I started a product design course I thought, this is enough! I didn't want to be seen using products like that. Although it was a useful aid, it was way too conspicuous.



A Painted Ivory Marriage Casket,  
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

I realised I could redesign the button hook as a much more aesthetically pleasing, and much smaller, hair clip, which doubles up as a button hook. I then designed a dog-tag zip pull for a young man who only had use of one hand. It's all about trying to remove the negative or medicalised stigma. That's really important, and is one of the core philosophies behind my inclusive design approach.

**AH: That's a really interesting word, stigma, associated with certain products. So in a way, part of your intention is to break free from stigma. Is there an aspect of celebrating using something that's a bit different and a bit special?**

**JRN:** Yes. Many of these kinds of NHS aids are designed to be generic - they need to work for everybody. They're not designed by designers, they're designed by medical professionals with an orthopaedic perspective. That's partly to do with cost and scale, but can't we design a medical aid like this with a more pleasing design?

**AH: How can we communicate a sense of specialness that does not connote a negative exclusivity at the same time?**

**JRN:** I wonder about the boundary between inclusive design and designing for exclusivity. While we tend to think of inclusivity as 'for everyone', I would say that inclusive design can fulfill an exclusive, bespoke need for one individual. It's universal design that is for everyone. Exclusive is often thought of as hierarchical and privileged, and inclusive is understood as 'fit for all' and everyone is included. I'd say that the terms universal and inclusive often get muddled. Universal is one design that is fit for all, which is not the same as inclusive. While my small button hook hair clip is exclusively for me and my particular preferences, it is inclusive in the sense it allows me to participate as freely as the majority. Whereas the ivory casket seems to have been designed with exclusivity in mind.

**AH: For you Jess, there seems to be this intimate relationship between user and product?**

**JRN:** Yes. The reason I want these medical aids to be redesigned with individuals, who then have a deep connection with the product, is that I didn't have that myself. That was lost through my having to adapt to using these universal aids. So for me it's about saying, yes, I wear these things, but hey, they make me look good! It's about turning useful, universal, and generic design into something special, positive, and personalised.

**KB:** For me, in terms of science communication, it's about making science for everyone. People talk about making science 'accessible', but I don't really like that term because I think it implies dumbing down. I would say it's about showing the audience why science is relevant to them and why they should care. It's about knowing your audience and catering to what they're interested in, what they value, and what may affect them – what could benefit them.

**JRN:** What is the ivory casket worth? In an art historical context, is value always linked to money?

**KB:** The ivory casket is one of the more expensive ivory pieces in the Courtauld's decorative collection, and was obviously very expensive to produce in its day. There was no mass production at that time and the best craftsmen were used, adding to the uniqueness, which gives the casket its value. But what's interesting here is that while it was originally thought the casket was made for someone very important, we now realise it was probably made for someone of lesser importance, which could have decreased its value, actually.

**AH: How important is the relationship between function and aesthetics in products?**

**JRN:** I would say it's very important. My hairclip still has the same function as a button hook aid, but it's a more beautiful item that I'd be happy to use wherever I am..

**KB:** We can't say exactly what the function of the casket is and the beauty of the design doesn't reveal this. While we think we know that the casket was made to commemorate the union of two important families, we still don't know what it was used for or why those materials were chosen. We can only imagine that as a casket it was designed to contain something, and the luxurious, sumptuous rare materials, the care taken and the high quality craftsmanship all imply that it would have been a display object, something that you show off. This interpretation is almost all that we have, in the absence of documentation.



Hair clip button hook © DESIGN FOR DISABILITY



Dog-tag zip pull © DESIGN FOR DISABILITY

Illuminating Objects Interns are responsible for selecting, displaying and interpreting their object in the Gallery, including giving Lunchtime Talks, and providing online content as well as blogs. The point of the internship is to provide connections with academic fields outside of the history of art, such that each intern is tasked with 'illuminating' their chosen object through the lens of their academic specialism.

During Courtauld Connects, the Illuminating Objects Internship is being run in partnership with the Science Museum. The project is led by Sacha Gerstein at the Courtauld and Dr Katy Barrett, Curator of Art at the Science Museum, with support from the Head of Exhibitions.

Find out more about the Illuminating Objects programme [sites.courtauld.ac.uk/illuminating-objects/objects/](https://sites.courtauld.ac.uk/illuminating-objects/objects/)

#### QUESTIONS:

The words 'art' and 'design' are often used in combination. Similarly, you might come across the terms 'fine art' and 'decorative art' in a gallery context – what types of objects/practices are being separated with these labels?

Does it make sense to separate them? Why or why not?

What questions might a design historian ask about an object like the casket compared to an art historian?

Do objects like the hair clip and zip pull have a place in an art gallery or museum?

Why do you think this?

#### LINK:

[designfordisability.co.uk](https://designfordisability.co.uk)

Jess Ryan-Ndegwa is Product and Furniture Design graduate and the founder of Design for Disability. Her focus is on working collaboratively with people with impairments and disabilities, using an inclusive design philosophy, enabling the product's user to be fully included throughout the design process. "I believe good design helps people do things they might otherwise not be able to do."





Portrait of a black girl, 1830-35, graphite, by WILLIAM HENRY HUNT (1790 - 1864) 22.1 x16.8 cm  
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

# Works on Paper

## —Demystifying Research Practice

Dr Rachel Sloan, Assistant Curator of Works on Paper, shares her approach to researching a drawing, taking us step by step through her process as she examines one of the lesser known works in the collection, William Henry Hunt's Portrait of a black girl. Prints and Drawings Room Assistant and MA Art History student, Heather Nickels, underscores the importance of unearthing evidence relating to hidden or marginalised representations of black people throughout the centuries, and its value as a counter-narrative to Victorian art history.

### RESEARCHING A DRAWING

Portrait of a black girl (1830-35) by William Henry Hunt

The Courtauld Gallery holds a substantial collection of drawings and watercolours by the British artist William Henry Hunt (1790-1864). Hunt is best known for his lush still life watercolours featuring flowers, fruits and birds' nests (so much so that he was actually nicknamed 'Bird's Nest' Hunt) but he was also a prolific figural artist. One of his figure drawings – a small chalk study of a young black girl – has always intrigued me, both for the vivid sense of personality it conveys and also because there are relatively few representations of people of colour in the Gallery's collection. Who was this girl, and how did Hunt come to portray her?

There are a number of paths through which I can pursue my research. Everything starts with the object itself. I begin by looking at it closely, both to gain a sense of the time and effort Hunt devoted to it (he rendered his model's clothing and background in quick strokes and focused much of his attention on her face and her expression, a mixture of cheeky boldness and timidity) and also in search of any inscriptions that might identify the model. Unfortunately, there are none – just his signature.

My next port of call is the drawing's object file. Each work in the collection has both a paper object file and a catalogue record on our database, containing provenance information (the work's ownership history and how it came to The Courtauld), exhibition history and literature. From these I don't learn anything about the model's identity, but I do discover that Hunt is known to have worked with black models on several occasions in the 1830s, and that the drawing was included in an exhibition on the depiction of children in Georgian England held at the Holburne Museum in Bath in 2005. I also learn that the drawing's previous owner, Sir John Witt, purchased it at Christie's, so I could search out the relevant sale catalogue to see if any further history of ownership is recorded.

At this point I need to expand my search further, to the library to read as much as I can about Hunt, as well as to the Witt Library (The Courtauld Institute's image library) to look for similar works in the hope that they might offer further clues (for example, did he use the model for this drawing more than once?).

Some books lead me to others, which in turn point me to articles, or archival sources. I also find some useful material online: other museums with collections of Hunt's work, like the British Museum and the National Museums Liverpool, turn out to hold other prints and drawings depicting black models, and his entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography lists some archival sources that I could check, such as his ledgers which are kept at the Royal Society of Watercolour Painters. Perhaps these might record the names of models he used? It's worth a look. It's worth remembering that no researcher works alone – I can turn to others with more expertise in this type of research who might be able to recommend a few directions for further research that I haven't thought of.

Research isn't a straightforward process – it can be more like a spider web or a maze or a winding path with multiple detours than a neat, straight road, and if you aren't always able to answer your original question, you might make unexpected discoveries that raise even more questions.

In this case, I learned that Hunt's treatment of black models wasn't always as sympathetic as it was in the case of the girl in the Courtauld drawing, where we can sense a real engagement, even complicity, between artist and model; he also did a couple of more caricatural depictions of black children with titles drawn from the minstrel shows popular in his day. They were reproduced as lithographs forming part of a series of 'Comic Sketches' presumably made for the entertainment of a white audience, and they make very uncomfortable viewing today. Yet there are other drawings and watercolours that, like the Courtauld drawing, emphasise their models' dignity and humanity rather than their comic potential.

This got me thinking about the place Hunt's drawing occupies in The Courtauld Gallery's collection. For an array of reasons (the history of collecting in the UK in general; the personal tastes of the collectors who gave or bequeathed their collections to The Courtauld in particular; the way the history of art was taught until fairly recently, to name just a few), there aren't many images of people of colour in our collection; the main exception to this is a group of figure studies by Glyn Philpot (1884-1937) of a black servant who frequently modelled for him.



In the handful of works produced before 1830, they tend either to be staffage (small figures used in a landscape for the purpose of scale) used to enhance the 'exoticism' of a non-European landscape, or to be depicted in a caricatured, patronising manner. Hunt's portrait is, as far as I can tell, the earliest drawing we have that treats its subject as an individual rather than as a decorative element or a figure of fun. It is also an appealing drawing in and of itself, and I can't help wondering why it hasn't been displayed here before. Was it perhaps deemed not to 'fit in' with other works in the collection because of its subject?

I suspect, however, that the reason for its neglect might be more benign: Hunt, although popular and successful in his lifetime, soon fell out of fashion and was little studied and little exhibited for most of the 20th century – not an uncommon fate for an artist. In fact, there has only recently been a revival of scholarly interest in his work, particularly in his figure studies. I think the time is more than ripe to dig further into the secrets of this intriguing drawing – and hopefully, at some point in the not-too-distant future, get it onto our gallery walls.

DR RACHEL SLOAN

### REFRAMING ART HISTORY

Works like The Courtauld collection's Portrait of a *black girl* by William Henry Hunt have long existed outside of the dominant and canonical art historical narrative. This particular work has never been written about in a scholarly publication and has only been exhibited once, almost fifteen years ago. For many years, researching black subjects or black artists was viewed as unusual, if not entirely dismissed. For those who persevered, the entire endeavour felt like a fool's task: the enormous gaps in archival documents and records (often for simple information, such as a sitter's first and last name) frequently prevented them from claiming any definitive results.

It is for that reason that the realisation of the 2019 exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, France entitled *Le modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse*, has been so revolutionary for the discipline of art history. For the first time in a long time, artwork of black individuals has finally been acknowledged as having come from within the canon as opposed to the margins. Many of the works on display in the Orsay exhibition are familiar to those of us who have studied History of Art: we recognise Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson's *Portrait du Citoyen Belley, ex-représentant des colonies* (1797), Marie-Guillemine Benoit's 1800 submission to the Salon of Paris, which (thanks to research for this exhibition) was retitled *Portrait of Madeleine (formerly Portrait d'une négresse)*, and of course, Edouard Manet's controversial *Olympia* from 1865. Although many of us art historians have seen these paintings reproduced in introductory art history lectures, textbooks and essays, within the walls of the Orsay these works took on an entirely new meaning.

Assembled together, the works of these black sitters felt somehow new, disconnected from previous associations and contexts. Instead of being understood within traditional contexts like submissions to the Paris salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or from the oeuvre of a famous artist, like Manet, these works were brought together to reveal a truth which, although always there, was rarely acknowledged: that these black figures played a significant role in Western art history, and therefore, history.

Having visited the exhibition three times in Paris and twice in New York (for the U.S. iteration of the show in fall 2018), one of the comments I heard again and again from peers, employers, professors and friends reflected genuine surprise: 'I never thought about those works like that, or in that context' was a common refrain. There are few

examples of exhibitions — and perhaps none on this scale that focus on the figure of the black individual at the centre. However, given the current discourse taking place both inside and outside arts institutions about diversity, audience outreach and decolonising collections, this exhibition is timely. And, so far, it has proven successful: it has been one of the most visited exhibitions at the Orsay to date. The message being to museums, of course, that there is financial success to be had in presenting exhibitions like *Le modèle noir*, in addition to the merits the exhibition presents to diversifying audiences and presenting alternate modernities.

It has long been common knowledge among art practitioners that the collecting practices of museums are often a major hindrance to creating a sense of inclusivity that reflects the communities they serve. For many reasons, as Rachel mentioned, collections rarely reflect the diversity of the world around them. As a curator, one of the primary questions in the planning of an exhibition is the theme: perhaps it will be a collection show (highlighting works from the institution's particular holdings) or an exhibition on a particular artist, time period or geographical location. If a curator is working primarily with a collection that only reflects the priorities of the founder or a major donor, the possible stories that can be told from the collection are often limited to the scope of the founder or donor. History continues to repeat itself and the discipline of art history remains stagnant.

As collecting institutions decide whether or not to commit available funds (and efforts) to supporting the work of historically marginalised individuals and/or artists, curators must also think about how they will represent the few in existence, like *Portrait of a black girl*, within their collection. As Rachel has proposed, the Courtauld collection has only a few examples of subjects of colour, and one reason they are rarely displayed is the fact that they do not 'fit in' with the overall narrative of the collection. With the work of scholars like Dr Denise Murrell, curator of *Le modèle noir*, we can promote inclusivity by challenging ourselves to find a place for these works of art in established collections. After all, they were created from within, in a world familiar to all of us, but rarely represented with black-skinned individuals.

As we continue to rethink our collections and how we collect, it is crucial to think about what, or who, is missing from the conversation. While we continue to struggle to find a place for these works of art, like *Portrait of a black girl*, that honour the contributions of black sitters, let us also think long and hard about the individuals creating these exhibitions, and whether they, too, reflect the collection.

MA Art History student and Prints and Drawings Assistant,  
HEATHER NICKELS

### QUESTIONS

Rachel found out about the artist and about the exhibition history of the drawing. How could this art historical research be connected with other subject areas (e.g. social history)?

What would you be interested to research about the sitter's lifetime (the first half of the 1800s)?

The title of the artwork (possibly assigned at a later date) implies a detached, even ethnographic, description of the sitter. Which elements of the drawing suggest that this was not the case?

Heather explains why evidence about those subjects marginalised by history is important. Do you think that not knowing who the sitter is affects our enjoyment or understanding of the artwork?

Are there other ways in which research and curation can engage the viewer?

### LINK

[www.deborahrobertsart.com/collage](http://www.deborahrobertsart.com/collage)

American artist Deborah Roberts combines found and manipulated images with hand drawn or painted details to create hybrid figures. Her work uses double meanings, symbols and multiple layers to explore notions of 'otherness' and critique perceptions of ideal beauty. "My early ideals of race and beauty were shaped by and linked through paintings of renaissance artists and photographs in fashion magazines."





Adam and Eve, 1526, LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER (1472-1553)  
Oil on panel, 80.8 x 117.1 cm  
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

OVERLEAF: Sketchbook Illustration by TOYA WALKER

# Painting

## — Women, Creation, Symbolism

Dr Karen Serres, Curator of Paintings, brings to light aspects of the Judeo-Christian creation story, Adam and Eve, painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder in 1526, while illustrator Toya Walker offers a visual response exploring the ways this painting correlates with other ideas in modernity - from Martin Luther King to Kim Kardashian West.

### ADAM AND EVE

This painting is the largest and most complex in a series of over 50 compositions Cranach did of the Adam and Eve theme, which was incredibly popular in his day. This theme was a way of representing the nude and a lush landscape in the guise of a religious subject matter.

These kind of paintings were created for private worship rather than for public devotion.

The arrangement of the figures on either side of the Tree of Knowledge is an allusion to Cranach's illustrious predecessor, Albrecht Dürer, who made a print of this theme with the same bipartite composition.

The use of transparent glazes allows Cranach to render beautiful highlights on the various surfaces and textures, something only oil painting could have achieved (rather than the Italian egg tempera painting).

The animals are all probably observed from life (and from dead bodies of hunted deer and boar), save for the lion who seems to derive from a dog and from models in 'copy books'. The horse in the background is not a unicorn, as is often said. Some animals were painted before the figures and some were added at the end, over the already painted surface.

Cranach was court painter to the Elector of Saxony (the centre of which is now Dresden but which was at the time based in Wittenberg), and both men were close to Protestant Reformer Martin Luther, and thus fervent Protestants.

The artist was born Lucas Maier in Kronach, and took his name from his birth place when he left

### SYMBOLISM

- The animals surrounding Adam and Eve symbolize the bountifulness of the Garden of Eden before the Fall.
- The meek lion on Eve's side and the grazing sheep on Adam's embody the peace and harmony that reign in the world God created but which is about to be destroyed by Adam's gesture of eating the apple..

- The vine heavy with grapes that twists around the trunk is a symbol of wine and an allusion to the blood of Christ at the Last Supper. Its ascending movement counteracts the descending serpent who tempts Eve and Adam, and is meant as the symbol of the ultimate salvation of mankind through Christ. The painting is thus about sin and redemption.

- The role played by Eve as temptress to a clueless and naïve Adam, is highly fraught. The message is that women are dangerously alluring, and yet Cranach's paintings delight in representing nude women, playing on that allure.

- The prominent placement of Cranach's signature on the top of the tree trunk is very bold in a religious painting. It puts the artist at the centre of the painting (defiantly right underneath the serpent!) and shatters the naturalistic illusion the painter created, by bringing attention to the surface of the work.

- The inscription is composed of the date (1526) and an emblem (a snake with bat wings and a ring in its mouth), which was Cranach's coat of arms and his signature from 1508 onwards.

DR KAREN SERRES, Curator of Paintings

### QUESTIONS:

How would you describe Adam and Eve's body language and expressions respectively? What lessons do you think the original viewers were supposed to take away from this artwork?

Is the significance of a rebellious woman at the start of the Christian story entirely negative?

How would you depict Eve? What are the qualities and attributes you think the first female should have?

What is your idea of paradise? How would you represent your paradise using symbols from the natural world?

### LINK:

[www.instagram.com/drawnbytoya/](http://www.instagram.com/drawnbytoya/)

Illustrator Toya Walker's sketchbook response to Adam and Eve references social housing, civil rights, feminism, religion, celebrity, selfies and existentialism, revealing how an analysis of this 500 year old painting offers a bountiful pushing off point for thinking through 21st century questions. "Researching this artwork, I was fascinated to find myself considering themes of morality, sexism, identity, trust, integrity, politics – and to wonder, what is the relationship between visual culture and societal pressure?"



# ADAM and EVE

LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER

- Master of landscape animals & nudes.

HE PAINTED AND PRINTED MANY DIFFERENT VARIATIONS ON THIS THEME



MARTIN LUTHER  
1483-1546



MARTIN LUTHER KING  
1929-1968

SHARING MORE THAN A NAME?

CRANACH ACTIVE IN LOCAL POLITICS & FRIENDLY WITH MARTIN LUTHER ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION. CRANACH SET UP A PRINTING PRESS & USED IT TO CIRCULATE PAMPHLETS PROMOTING THE CAUSE & CHALLENGING THE AUTHORITY OF THE CATHOLIC POPE.

(1517) CRANACH IS SAID TO HAVE ATTACHED A PAMPHLET HE PRINTED CONTAINING LUTHER'S NINETY-FIVE THESES TO THE DOOR OF A CHURCH.

(1966) MARTIN LUTHER KING AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER TOOK A PAGE FROM HIS GERMAN NAMESAKE'S BOOK & ATTACHED HIS DEMANDS FOR FAIR & OPEN HOUSING TO THE DOORS OF CITY HALL.

(NOW) HOW DO WE PROTEST FOR POLITICAL CHANGE NOW? → SOCIAL MEDIA, VIRAL POSTS?, GRASSROOTS ACTION, EXTINCTION REBELLION

HUMAN BODY IS NO.1 SUBJECT OF EUROPEAN ART (& SEVERAL OTHER WORLD ARTS) BUT FEW OF THESE BASES PURSUON OBSERVATION. MANY INVOLVE RADICAL ALTERATION OF BODY AS A PLAYTHING? IMPOSITION OF STRICT & PUNISHING IDEALS - OR IS IT JUST AN EXERCISE IN IMAGINATION OF FANTASY?



FROM CRANACH'S TAUT SLINKY & ANATOMICALLY IMPLAUSIBLE EVE TO FLESHY CURVES OF RUBENS TO THESE ZERO IDEALS OF FASHION MODELS & ILLUSTRATIONS TO PHOTOSHOPPED SELFIES & MAGAZINE IMAGES PERPETUATING IDEALS ABOUT FEMALE (K)MALE FORMS

## CREATION STORIES

EVERY CULTURE HAS A DIFFERENT CREATION STORY/MYTH  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

'IF WE CONTINUE TO SPEAK IN THIS SAMENESS - SPEAK AS MEN HAVE SPOKEN FOR CENTURIES, WE WILL FAIL EACH OTHER.'

QUOTE FROM ESSAY BY LUCE IRIGARAY FEMINIST THEORIST - WRITTEN BACKWARDS FOR THE SUBJECT NOT THE VIEWER

NOT ALL THE ANIMALS IN THE PAINTING WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO OBSERVE IN GERMANY AT THE TIME & NO PHOTOS SO CRANACH WOULD HAVE USED REFERENCE BOOKS - LION DOESN'T LOOK THAT LIFE LIKE.

LAMB OF GOD OR COMMENT ON ADAM'S SHEEPISH BEHAVIOUR?

A PAIR OF PARTRIDGES

STORK HAS ONLY ONE NEST → FAITHFUL? PIETY, PURITY



SEDUCTIVE VISION OF PARADISE WITH HIGHLY DECORATIVE & FINELY PAINTED DETAIL TO APPEAL TO WEALTHY DATE & BAT-WINGED SERPENT (FROM CRANACH'S CREST) FOR ENJOYMENT THAN RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. LIGHTING SUGGESTS DUSK → IMPENDING END OF AN ERA OF INNOCENCE...

SERPENT LOOKS ON AS ADAM SUCCUMBS TO TEMPTATION.

INNOCENCE LEAVING GARDEN OF EDEN?

BOAR = DEVIL?

WOMAN CAST AS TEMPTRESS

LION → CHRIST RE-SURRECTED!

15426 wola





MMRMS Studio, Goodas, Image by SABB ADAMS,  
Model: YAGAMOTO, Styling: CHANEL BAKER, Art Direction: SHAQUILLE KEITH

# Institute

## — Fashion, Status, Masculinity

Semiotics, the study of how meaning is created and communicated through visual and linguistic signs and symbols, reveals how no images are neutral - artworks and media images rely on a shared cultural language that they tap into. The way signs are used, accepted or rejected indicate the tastes and desires of wider society. Viewing historic artworks through 21st century eyes, London College of Fashion Menswear graduate, Thomas Harvey, and art historian, author, and lecturer, Elizabeth Kutesko, explore the changing social norms of masculinity, visual cultures, and decolonisation in response to portraits in the collection.

**ELIZABETH KUTESKO:** Can you tell me about yourself, and the inspiration behind the brand MMRMS Studio, which you say is inspired by what you've called Queer Romanticism?

**THOMAS HARVEY:** I was born in Jamaica, and then moved here when I was four. All my earliest memories are of Jamaica. We'd go almost every year for Christmas or summer break - I learned to ride a bike there, I remember climbing up waterfalls, I only have good memories. There'd be street parties or someone would always be having a barbeque. My uncles are really funny, they'd be making jokes with me. I don't have any bad memories about Jamaica at all. So I grew up in a Jamaican household, and my mum will never let go of being Jamaican. That's been part of my upbringing - don't forget who you are, don't forget where you came from - which I think is in part reflected in my work. I often think British culture is about other cultures. When you ask me what's British culture I say, it depends where you are - places like Brixton or Dalston in London have a rich Caribbean culture and those are the places I grew up around, so that is being British for me.

When talking about blackness it's often reduced to the body; in that sense it's important for me to make clothes that visually represent my body, my physicality. I want to continue to make this type of work so that people who look like me can be celebrated. So people can say, "I look like him, he's doing really well, and his body is beautiful." That's what the MMRMS (pronounced Ma-ro-mas) brand represents. Expanding notions of what 'black fashion' is.

**EK:** When we talk about 'black artists' or 'women artists' it's as if we're recognising them based on their identity rather than their art...

**TH:** I think, perhaps more so in America, when you talk about blackness, people tend to jump to music - rap and hip hop - which creates strong links to the idea of 'urban'. Blackness is always linked to urbanism, and this comes through in

certain kinds of fashion too. Muscular, posturing bodies are typical in rap videos, for example, so when you put certain types of clothing on a certain body-frame you get people making assumptions about who that person is or what they represent. But what I've tried to do with MMRMS is putting clothes on a black male body that shows black males in a different way. Blackness is not one thing, or one body.

If you go to Jamaica, you might see guys in really tight jeans, really tight tops that are too small for them - almost cropped - and if you were to have that here, that would be considered a femme way of dressing. It's so effeminate. And in places like Nigeria too, many people dress so flamboyantly - bright colours, tight suits. I want to challenge this reductive association between black male bodies and the urban.

**EK:** So when you set up MMRMS, what was the aim, what were you trying to do? How did it fit with your then design partner, who started the brand with you [although you're both now working on your own collections]?

**TH:** With my design partner at the time, who's Spanish, it was always so interesting, because we're both part of the LGBT community. We always had these interesting but slightly weird conversations about race - he had no idea, you know. Working together was a learning experience for him, as well as him becoming a lot more aware of and interested in a culture that isn't his own. Geography, experience, and what knowledge you have access to, is so relevant. For a long time, we've been taught to value certain types of cultures that exclude black and, until recently, queer bodies. This is where we worked really well together, contesting what's held up as having value and beauty.

**EK:** We talk about this in Cultural Studies, where we draw on American writers. To be exploring masculinities through fashion is one way to engage with the post-colonial landscape, decolonising through fashion. Disciplines such as European Philosophy, Art History, Economics, have very conventional and conservative approaches. They also come with status and privilege - these are the things that have been devalued in black people; assumptions about class, ability, interests, are prescribed to you by white systems of knowledge.

**TH:** Looking at the portraits I've chosen for this resource, the portrait of Charles Tudway MP, Portrait of a Man in Armour, and the portrait of Charles and Captain John Sealy - their styles are so different to how we think of masculinity today. Yet, a lot of the poses and stances that we do when we're shooting fashion are very similar to these poses from historic art - they're all quite flamboyant and fun, whereas



you're used to seeing black bodies represented as tough and strong.

**EK:** About the artworks you've chosen, the Charles Tudway portrait is painted by Gainsborough as a landed gentleman. Everything about his pose, clothing, gaze suggests ease, elegance and authority. The landed estate can be seen in the background. With the Sealy brothers portrait, everything about it – from the dress, pose, the neoclassical setting – is about status and hegemonic, white heterosexuality. The palm trees in the background are a tiny bit of exoticism, hinting at the subjects' superiority as British colonialists; we're a more ethnically diverse culture today.

**TH:** The problem is, people say, "we need diversity, let's just put some people of colour in there." I've noticed in fashion there'll be an all white cast in a catwalk show, people complain, so the next season they'll put a couple of black people in there - but only because people have complained. It's important that whenever you have the platform to do something as a person of colour, you make sure you use that to implement positive ideas of diversity. People of colour (POC) who are in power need to support those who aren't supported – you want to bring other talented people of colour into the workforce if you're in position of power.

Lots of my friends are doing good things; we've formed a community and have built a network of photographers, stylists... so whenever they're doing a shoot and they need clothes, I can help, or if they need help with assisting for styling, they'll come to me, which supports my brand too. [Vogue editor] Edward Enninful is doing great things. And then once the big houses see that POC are spending money on clothes or into certain looks they put more POC in that place to help them make more money. For corporations that's the bottom line – that's the only way people will naturally start bringing more POC in – because it's good for business.

**EK:** So it's diversity as a business model?

**TH:** But why shouldn't POC contribute to discourses about French 19th century painting, or a sculpture from the 1800's? To assume – as we're taught – to only be aware of and only ascribe value to Eurocentric cultures, we're failing in our mission to foster a global culture.

**EK:** You're so right. Kobena Mercer writes about how afro hair, or black hair, for example, is a sign of resistance – but then it's also the sign by which people have been categorised as black. So people are competing for the same symbols creating this complicated terrain.

**TH:** It's reductive. Where do your own ideas about fashion as resistance, or decolonising fashion stem from?

**EK:** I suppose I'm interested in identity and ethnicity. I always think that ethnicity is very situational, in the sense

that it depends who you are and who you're with, and the construction of identity through the body always involves both insiders and outsiders – I'm very interested in that. Any idea of national identity or blackness or whiteness or whatever it is, involves both sides of the debate. That's what really fascinates me.

**TH:** The British empire is a common or shared history, I suppose. Yet, it's because of empire that you're only black in the sense that you're not white – blackness is always in negation to whiteness. And you're white because you're not black.

**EK:** Here at The Courtauld I teach an occasional course, Fashion & Photography, a history of fashion photography over the last 100 years but in a global context. So I really try to get students to think about really famous key practitioners, like Edward Steichen or Louise Dahl-Wolfe, or Richard Avedon or Corinne Day, but then also to ask, what are the fashion cultures that exist beyond western Europe and the USA? What's happening in Latin America, or what's happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo, fashion cultures there but also how they're documented by both European photographers and by local Congolese photographers. I also teach at Central St Martins, which has made me realise that when you have a very international cohort of students, who have these incredible histories that they come from, to just be teaching a very traditional history of fashion, it really just doesn't sit. You can't get away with it any more, nor would I want to. There are these incredibly rich histories to uncover through talking about fashion, and how people have constructed their identities.

And, I suppose really this is about a post-colonial notion of trying to listen to voices previously silenced, learn about histories that we haven't heard, and turning it on its head. So instead of looking at fashion and images about fashion from the perspective of the metropolis, or London or New York, or Paris, think about it from Rio de Janeiro, or Sao Paulo, or from Brazzaville, or Kinshasa. De-centering the Eurocentricity of fashion and all of the hierarchies embedded in this huge industry. If you think about fashion seasons, spring/summer, autumn/winter, they're fashion seasons for the global north that the rest of the world slots into. But also thinking, OK, what are the hierarchies embedded in the way that we study fashion, and the way that I teach fashion history to my students?

**TH:** People are now coming of age with this awareness and these ideas, and the tools and platforms are there to talk in more productive ways about blackness, masculinity, equality, identity...

**EK:** Can you tell me more about your vision behind Queer Romanticism – what are you aiming for in terms of the clothes?

**TH:** Queer is a word people have reclaimed over the years,

particularly in the UK, because of course it was a slur in the past. We wanted to create this concept of how a guy might look who's very in love, he's queer, in touch with his feminine side, and how can we show a male figure in the most attractive, seductive way without looking like a man in women's clothing. The clothes needed to be outright male and masculine, but with really delicate detailing, fine stitches with lots of seams and pleats, soft sensory fabrics like cashmere, buttons hand cast in sterling silver.

**EK:** Where did you do the photo shoot with Jordan?

**TH:** We found a bar in Shoreditch made from shipping containers and we loved it and felt it t the brand – it looks a little like Jamaica; you'll find these big shipping containers in Jamaica, and oil drums which are used in Jamaica to jerk chicken etc. This London bar had lots of oil drums around so it resembled areas of Jamaica that we wanted to call to mind.

**EK:** The way you're describing how you situate models for shoots is so much like a portrait – because in all of these Courtauld portraits here it's all about the pose, the dress, but also the setting – like the Tudway portrait with this guy standing next to a neo-classical pillar, all of this is constructing his identity as a white, wealthy, male. I really like that in your own work, the attention to detail, down to place.

**TH:** In lots of shoots of people in Jamaica will have models wearing big brands, Gucci or whatever, with beautiful, expensive garments juxtaposed against a background that's dirt, or cement, or slightly industrial looking places. There's a slight humour to the contrast and that's something we wanted to explore too. Yet the stance in this image of Jordan here is very powerful...

**EK:** And his gaze...

**TH:** And his gaze. Yes.

**EK:** How did you choose Jordan for the shoot?

**TH:** I first met him at a QPOC dancehall party in London. Dancehall is a huge part of Jamaican youth culture. Jordan's shoot is based around this idea of celebrating the body, fashion, beautifully dressed people in sometimes less salubrious surroundings.

**EK:** It's not just the collection, the clothes, but also the pose; and the whole setting that's communicating this idea of queer romanticism, which taps into ideas of Jamaican identity too. And it's so interesting because the notion of status, in all of these images, is shared by the way that they're dressed but it's also setting. So especially those two portraits, Tudway and the Sealy brothers, with the neo-classical architecture - you just get a little hint of power, wealth, knowledge, just enough to reinforce the status of



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES TUDWAY, MP, 1765  
Thomas Gainsborough (1727 - 1788), Oil on canvas, 227.4 x 156.7 cm  
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

these men, the subject.

Richard J. Powell, is interesting in this regard – he uses this phrase, 'cutting a figure', talking specifically about black portraiture and, against the paradigm of modern portraiture, examining the relationship that's established between the subject and the author of the image (rather than subject and viewer). Powell questions the social capital of black representation, and explores the ways that fashion, and pose, and the body, are used to display a form of resistance or agency. And, for Pierre Bourdieu, the body, how we carry ourselves, how we dress, how we feel, is key to how the game of power within any field is played out. Against these contexts, queer romanticism disrupts the everyday reproduction of hierarchies of cultural value and taste.

**TH:** Questions of diversity and queer people generally are a lot more current now, hopefully not just as a passing fad.

**EK:** Which of these paintings would you say you feel most connected to?

**TH:** I really like *Portrait of a Man in Armour* because of his stance – and because he's holding a hammer. Many of the images I came across in the collection, the men were dressed to show power, or wearing armour to show strength; in this





MMRMS Studio, Goodas, Image by SABB ADAMS,  
Model: YAGAMOTO, Styling: CHANEL BAKER, Art Direction: SHAQUILLE KEITH



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES AND CAPTAIN JOHN SEALY, 1773  
Tilly Kettle (1735-1786), Oil on canvas, 142.5 x 233.2 cm  
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London





PORTRAIT OF A MAN IN ARMOUR, Circa 1550, Italy (North) 16th century (1500 - 1599) Oil on canvas, 213.3 x 114.5 cm  
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

painting the subject is holding a tool or a weapon. In my photo, Jordan's holding a bag. Both these images display a sense of power and strength, even though the dress is very different. I loved the stance the subject had in this painting – the hand on the hip and the leg turned out.

**EK:** He looks powerful but also a little bit effeminate. Or elegant

**TH:** There's a sense of elegance, there's a sense of power; nowadays, can you be masculine holding a weapon, can you be masculine holding a purse? It was this correlation between the two images that struck me. It's an interesting question.

ELIZABETH KUTESKO (PhD Courtauld Institute of Art) is Lecturer in Cultural Studies at Central Saint Martins and Associate Lecturer at The Courtauld Institute. She is the author of *Fashioning Brazil: Globalization and the Representation of Brazilian Dress in National Geographic* (Bloomsbury, 2018)

THOMAS HARVEY graduated from London College of Fashion with a First in 2018. He is Creative Director of menswear brand, MMRMS Studio

#### QUESTIONS

In the 18th century, portrait sitters wanted to show that they belonged to a small and privileged elite. They conveyed belonging and conformity by displaying similar fashions, poses and expressions. By contrast, how do the models in Thomas Harvey's Maromas photoshoot express individuality?

Any transgression from the normal modes of display would have been noted (e.g. Charles and Captain John Sealy forgoing wigs and wearing relatively bright clothing) and an explanation expected (in this case they are far from home). How do the contemporary photographs engage with and/or subvert elements of historical portraiture?

What do you consider to be the signs or indicators of masculinity in these artworks?

Do they have fixed meanings or are they open to interpretation?

#### LINK

[www.othellodesouzahartley.com](http://www.othellodesouzahartley.com)

Othello De'Souza-Hartley is a London-based visual artist working with photography and film. Inspired by classical painting, his work centres on the socio-politics of identity. De'Souza-Hartley's Masculinity Project questions notions of masculinity in the 21st century. "I am questioning what my and other mens' perception of masculinity is today. What does it consist of and what are the foundations that it is based upon? Is masculinity a performance?"



MMRMS Studio: *Queer Romanticism*, Image by ALMA ROSAZ, Model: JORDAN A, Styling: CHANEL BAKER, CHARLENE COULIBALY





Image by © CLAUDIA JANKE

# Conservation

## — Technology, Access, Future

There has long been an interrelationship between art, conservation, and science. For about 80 years, art conservators have been directly collaborating with artists, but also with chemists, physicists and other scientists. Today, while the digital realm is helping the development of conservation techniques, including the newest forms of contemporary art such as time-based media, we ask, what are the potential relationships between emerging technologies and art conservation?

**PIA GOTTSCHALLER:** I'm Senior Lecturer in Conservation and Technology at The Courtauld Institute of Art. The Courtauld offers training in both wall and easel painting conservation. My specialty is modern and contemporary painting practice, and while we teach a strand of modern and contemporary art in our programme, it's mainly about Old Masters. The Courtauld's Conservation and Technology department is the oldest one in the country.

**ALEX FEFEGHA:** I'm a Creative Technologist, and that means trying to use technology in really creative and experimental ways. I went to art school, Central St Martins, so I come from more of a design perspective. Why I'm interested in this space is because I'd been doing a lot of work about how we use artificial intelligence (AI), or neural networks, and in recent times there have been conversations, pushed by the media, about how AI art is here. I disagree with those types of narratives; I think computers are just another type of tool. The human hand is always already there to create the algorithm to train the machine. Machine copies of Old Masters, for example, are just imitations. It's just imitation art. You've created a neural network to study different artworks over a period of time and then told the computer to create an Old Master based on that data set – it's an imitation. However, artists can leverage AI as a critical thing to explore the limitations of this technology.

**PG:** [Referring to an AI painting by French artists' collective, Obvious, which sold at auction for \$432,000] I'm very cynical about the art market, and it only takes one person, or two probably, to decide that they will do an artificial bid to drive the price up – there's so much market manipulation.

**AF:** You do have to see that as a PR stunt. There's nothing more fascinating about it than a programmer programming. It isn't like a person thought about the world and created a response, to which I have an emotional connection. One of the challenging things is about attribution to the artists who are working with these technologies. It's like using a camera to capture an image. When the camera was first introduced it probably caused a lot of issues with traditional painters...

**PG:** Yes, they thought they would become obsolete and that they would have no good reason to paint anymore.

**AF:** I think it's a similar thing with AI. The media has over amplified it and art dealers have jumped on the wave of publicity. Going back to that idea of some people having insider knowledge who are driving the market - they're maintaining and reproducing economic inequalities through their access to the system. I come from the angle that the purpose of this technology is a tool to augment the human's creativity, rather replace it.

[With regard to accessing technology] I've done lots of research on gender and racial bias and AI. It goes back to the colonisation aspect - who's in control of the technology? You know, when we talk about AI and art, it's still a very small group of people who work with these technologies. To have access to the technologies, you need to develop the skill sets, and to train a neural network you need resources. It isn't necessarily as simple as downloading an art tool - there are still barriers to entry. Many of the artists we talk about now are funded by the big technology companies who have developed these AI technologies, and they're happy to fund artists to go and do research, do their stuff, and then leverage what the artists have learnt..

The things is, first it's data. If I was to create an AI art piece today, and I wanted to go to a gallery to create a neural network to study a collection of paintings, the majority of the art would be on the European side of art. The computer only knows how to generate what it's been trained to do. It knows how to create more of the same from a data set of European art. What is the underlying or driving principle to preserve, to conserve art, would you say?

**PG:** As a conservator? Why do we do it? It's because culture, in the broadest sense, gives and reflects the identity of peoples, the world, and our society. And now it's such a loaded word you can hardly say that - but it lets people understand about a certain set of ideas or values. Art is always in some way indicative of a period of thought, an approach, political leanings - so when we think about wars for example, and the cultural heritage is being attacked or destroyed, people are hurt on a very deep level because culture demonstrates what people can do at their very best. Any art is somehow specific to a time or a particular local culture. But really good art is also at the same time always addressing the big subjects that affect all of us. Given that there are limited resources and people have to make choices, we rely on a consensus among specialists to identify what fulfills these two criteria, what is particularly precious to people from an open point of view, and what is our shared heritage.



Many conservators tend to be people who love to think about art in a rather silent way. A lot of our work is unseen; when we do our job really well it's invisible. Nobody should be able to see easily that something has been preserved. We're not an old profession - in the past artists restored, often basically repainted other artists' work, and it's only in the late 19th early 20th century, with science taking big steps forward, that conservators became conservators as a proper profession. One of the original concepts of The Courtauld Institute is that its founder, Samuel Courtauld, said he wanted students to closely study objects, processes, and materials, and not just ideas and political and social histories. That's what makes our institute special, I think.

We cannot work on first class Old Masters paintings all the time, sometimes it's also on lower quality work, but we're insistent that every student treats every artwork with the exact same care and respect. We can't really tell what will be considered important in twenty years. One of the key aspects of conservation is that we, the conservators, do not make a judgement on the artwork, but that we give it everything that we have.

**AF:** You talked about how artists re-made other artist's work before science enabled conservation to become a proper profession in its own right. That's really interesting because, from an A.I.-art perspective, these are pure imitations. Would an artist remake somebody else's work today?

**PG:** Using painting as an example, and bearing mind that in different countries you'll find that people have different approaches, here in the UK you would reconstruct the area of loss mimetically, you would basically make it look like it had never happened. But it would be documented, the area where the work has been done, and you would do it with materials that are reversible. We would make it look like it had not been damaged. Exceptions are artworks where a lot of information is lost and you have no record, no photograph or other information that helps you to figure out what's missing. If you have to completely make it up, well - in the UK, we wouldn't do that.

**AF:** There's a new conversation in AI on 'deep fakes'. People are making deep fakes where AI technology is used, to make disturbingly realistic videos, for example. Do we still see fake paintings in circulation?

**PG:** Well, originality is one thing I really think about. I know someone who owned a Picasso. When he got divorced, his ex-wife got the painting. But he really loved the painting, so he asked an artist to make an exact copy. So, he now has this copy hanging in his home. I do wonder how he can overlook



Image by © CLAUDIA JANKE

the fact that it's not the original, knowing it's not the real thing. We talked about it. He said, well, it looks exactly the same. Someone might ask, why pay millions of dollars for the original if you don't think it's worth anything? So the locus of where we think the originality really lies, it's a difficult question for some people to answer.

**AF:** This goes back to authorship. When we talk about democratising culture, I always think of it in terms of who's creating it. I come from the Internet era - my whole life has always been about democratisation of culture, through the Internet. I've forced my way into spaces that are not made for me, by doing it in a slightly anarchic, independent way, because it's a space I have access to. That's what I'm interested in. When I read back about certain histories, it's often about how there was a bunch of students who hated how things were - so they went and did their own stuff. And forty years later, their way of seeing the world is better understood and acclaimed. I like those stories - how do we build tools that reduce barriers to entry? How do we create spaces that make the tools accessible?

Right now, one of the things I'm trying to do in my own research is based on machine intelligence and Google Arts

& Culture Lab, who have an artists and machine intelligence arm. They're giving grants to people to explore this. I worked with a coder who was collaborating with set designer, Es Devlin. They created an algorithm for an interactive project called PoemPortraits. A deep learning neural network was trained on 19th century poems. When you give it a new word and a selfie, it generates a poem - which is displayed across your selfie. It's great. Now, I love music - I love hip hop. I'd want to know how I can use this algorithm to generate some sort of artistic hip hop music.

One of the challenging things is that because of the people who develop these tools, most of the machine-learning frameworks would learn to understand the way the English language is structured within a certain convention, and then replicate it. When it comes to rap, it's a different kind of thing. None of the frameworks can do it. This is an example of why I'm looking into ways to democratise access. When we look at artistic forms of rap, people who are telling an artistic story, that's not always appreciated. But if I create an algorithm that generates rap lyrics and open source the tool, I give the opportunity to other artists. That's me as a human being creating something with technology with the intention of allowing others to access it. If I'm just using technology for my own sake, I ain't helping no one - well, except for my bank account maybe! In that sense, technology can't solve diversity and inclusion. Access has to be built into the intention..

**PG:** Were you encouraged to go to Central St Martins (CSM)?

**AF:** Going to CSM was a strategic move for me, in a way. But I didn't know that type of world existed. I knew I was interested in the intersection between fashion and technology - and I wanted to get into that. Then I heard that Kanye West had wanted to go to CSM, but they wouldn't let him in - that's where I heard about it. Once I got in, I felt so lucky to have the place, it was incredible. I noticed that generally, people seemed to be wanting black students to create 'black' art, to respond as a 'black' art student. At that time, I was exploring Afro-futurism and science fiction as a tool to look at the future, but all of a sudden, people started asking me to join diversity and inclusion panels. I didn't have the expertise to talk about diversity and inclusion - my work was about the future and technologies! If you're only ever seen as marginalised and encouraged to only talk about that, it's very difficult.

Institutions are not set up to be inclusive and diverse in today's terms. The systems are hundreds of years old. In terms of this is how we learn, this is what's right, this is what's important, and this is where it's going to take you - these ideas need to be updated. The world has changed, and physical spaces, including learning institutions, will need to catch up..

ALEX FEFEFGHA is the co-founder & head creative technologist at COMUZI, an experimental design studio. He has an MA in Innovation from Central St Martins, COMUZI work with innovators to explore, imagine, prototype and test alternative futures that benefit humans and business. Clients include Nike, ASOS, Uber, BBC, University of Arts London, EY, and the NHS.

PIA GOTTSCHALLER is a specialist in modern and contemporary art, with a particular focus on issues of technical art history in postwar European, North American and Latin American painting practice. Pia holds a BA in art history from Ludwig Maximilians-Universität, Munich, a Postgraduate Diploma in the Conservation of Easel Paintings from The Courtauld, and a PhD in art technology from Technische Universität München.

#### QUESTIONS:

Conservators sometimes have to make difficult decisions about old art works that include changes and interventions from different eras - what to keep and what to remove. Gallery visitors are mostly unaware of these decisions, but is it important to know about them? Why or why not?

In some instances technological analysis can help to prove or disprove the authenticity of artwork when there is doubt among curators. These debates also tend to happen behind the scenes, but do you think there is potentially a public interest here?

What do you think gives art its value? If originality and uniqueness contributes to the value of an artwork, is A.I. an artist or a tool?

#### LINK:

[www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-ethics-of-dust/](http://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-ethics-of-dust/)

In 2016, artist, architect and conservator, Jorge Otero-Pailos, created an installation, The Ethics of Dust, in the oldest building in the Houses of Parliament. Made of latex and dust, The Ethics of Dust is a cast of Westminster Hall's east wall. The object began as part of the conservation of this thousand year old building. "What are the boundaries of the history that this building can contain?"



## KEY TERMS

### AFROFUTURISM

The reimagining of a future filled with arts, science and technology seen through a black lens. The term was conceived a quarter-century ago by white author Mark Dery in his essay *Black to the Future*, which looks at speculative fiction within the African diaspora.

### AESTHETIC

Designed to give pleasure through beauty, or showing great beauty; beauty may be understood as appealing to the senses.

### ALGORITHM

A process or set of rules to be followed in calculations or other problem-solving operations, especially by a computer.

### ARCHIVE

A collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

A.I. Is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems, which include learning (the acquisition of information and rules for using the information), reasoning (using rules to reach approximate or definite conclusions) and self-correction.

### AUTHORSHIP

The fact of being the writer of a book, article, or document, or the creator of a work of art.

### BESPOKE

Custom or tailor-made.

### BIAS

Inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.

### BLACK

A term of socially based racial classification or ethnicity used in certain countries to name people, particularly those of African, Caribbean, or Australian Aboriginal ancestry.

### BODY POLITICS

The term refers to strategies and practices around the body in relation to institutional power expressed in government and laws, disciplinary power exacted in economic production, discretionary power exercised in consumption, and personal power negotiated in intimate relations.

### BUTTON HOOK

Refers to a usually metal hook for pulling buttons through buttonholes.

### CANON

Conventional timeline of artists who are sometimes considered 'great' artists. Contemporary art history questions these rules of 'greatness' considering issues of gender, race, class and geography among others.

### CARAVAN NETWORK

Term describing a series of pathways and stoppages used for the commercial transport of cargo, or to refer trade over bodies of water, allowing goods to reach distant markets.

### CASKET

A small ornamental box or chest for holding jewels, letters, or other valued objects.

### CONSERVATION

Preservation and repair of archaeological, historical, and cultural sites and artefacts.

### CREST

A formal design used by a family, town, or organisation as the symbol that represents them.

### DATA SET

A collection of related sets of information that is composed of separate elements but can be manipulated as a unit by a computer.

### DECOLONISE

Refers to the undoing of colonial rule over subordinated countries. Today, decolonisation is used in the context of reforming institutions and the power relations intrinsic to the production, dissemination and consumption of cultural practices, processes of knowledge production, and the assignment of value onto 'art'.

### DEMOCRATISATION

The action of making something accessible to everyone

### DIVERSITY

Understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences.

### EBONY (HARDWOOD)

Because of exploitation and drastic population reductions, export of this wood species is currently banned.

### EUROCENTRIC

Focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as pre-eminent.

### EXCLUSIVE

Excluding or not admitting other things, or restricted to the person, group, or area concerned.

### EXOTICISM

Style or traits considered characteristic of a distant foreign country. The term is used pejoratively to define those who are seen as different, strange, unusual, or not white.

### FEMME

A term originating in communities of lesbian and bi women, used to describe a feminine gender role. Adopted by those who have a feminine gender expression, or actively embody a femme identity or gender presentation.

### GAY

Refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality - some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.

### HEGEMONIC

The social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group.

### HERALDRY

The system by which coats of arms and other armorial bearings are devised, described, and regulated.

### IDENTITY

The characteristics or qualities a person or place has that distinguishes them from others.

### INCLUSIVE

Refers to the imperative to embrace, value, and provide a sense of belonging to individuals regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or health care needs, so that all persons may be respected and appreciated as valued members of their communities.

### INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Inclusive design keeps the diversity and uniqueness of each individual in mind.

### IVORY

Hard white materials from the tusks and teeth of mammals, mainly elephants. Revered as a symbol of chastity, opulence and virtue since very early in history, the importation and sale of ivory in many countries is banned or severely restricted due to the decline in population of the animals that produce it.

### LGBTQ

The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer.

### LOCUS

A particular position or place where something occurs or is situated.

### MACHINE-LEARNING

An application of artificial intelligence (A.I.) that provides systems the ability to automatically learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed.

### MARGINALISATION

Refers to the treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral.

### MASCULINITY

A set of behaviours, presentations and roles which are culturally associated with being a man and/or possessing male sex characteristics.

### MIMETIC

Used to describe a form of imitation or representation.

### NEOCLASSICAL

Term used to refer to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts. The main Neoclassical movement coincided with the 18th century Age of Enlightenment.

### NEURAL NETWORK

A series of algorithms that endeavor to recognize underlying relationships in a set of data, through a process that mimics the way the human brain operates.

### OBJECT FILE

A computer file format used for the storage of object code and related data.

### OLD MASTERS

Given to refer to a painting by a great artist of former times.

### ORACY

The ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech.

### POC

Person of colour has been used at different points in history to describe people who are not white of European parentage.

### POSTCOLONIAL

The lens through which we view issues occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule and which can include, but are not limited to, issues of identity, culture, politics, and economics.

### PRIVILEGE

A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.



**PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY**

A term invented by the Marxist theorist Guy Debord in 1955 in order to explore how different places make us feel and behave. An intersection of psychology and geography, as the term suggests, focuses on our psychological experiences of the city.

**QPOC**

Queer Person of Colour

**QUEER**

A term used by those who reject specific labels of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**REPRESENTATION**

A term referring to equality of opportunity and visibility.

**ROMANTICISM**

A movement in the arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual.

**ROSEWOOD**

Due to extensive use leading to over-felling and harm to woodland ecosystems, Brazilian rosewood is now a protected wood under CITES laws (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora).

**SCULPTURE**

Making or representing two or three dimensional representative or abstract forms by carving, casting, or other shaping techniques.

**SEXUALITY**

A person's sexual orientation or preferences.

**STIGMA**

Discrimination associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person.

**TPOC**

Trans Person of Colour

**TRANSGENDER**

Umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

**UNIVERSAL**

Relating to or done by all people or things in the world or in a particular group; applicable to all cases.

**ELUCIDATIONS: LEARNING RESOURCE**

First Edition

CAREY ROBINSON

Learning and Outreach Manager

Courtauld Institute of Art Somerset House

LONDON WC2R 0RN

020 3947 7589

education@courtauld.ac.uk

All details correct at time of going to press



## NOTES



## NOTES




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 [courtauld.ac.uk/learn](https://courtauld.ac.uk/learn)

 [education@courtauld.ac.uk](mailto:education@courtauld.ac.uk)

 +44 (0) 20 3947 7589

The Courtauld Institute of Art  
Somerset House  
Strand  
London  
WC2R 0RN