

The British Library Works of Art

Reference: 2021-AA-Art

Supervisor (name & role)	Cam Sharp Jones (Visual Art Curator)
Department & Site	Visual Arts, Asian and African Collection, London (St Pancras)
Start date/Timeframe	From May 2021 (exact start date to be discussed with the supervisor)
Duration	3 months (or part-time equivalent) For a part-time placement, the student would be required to spend a minimum of 3 days/week on the project.
Suitability for remote working	There is potential for some placement tasks to be undertaken remotely, such as biographical and contextual research, but the placement holder should expect to regularly be on site in order to view collection items, input data and work directly with curators.

Context for placement

The Visual Arts section of the British Library is responsible for developing, curating and promoting a diverse range of material, including the Library's collection of prints, drawings and photographs related to South and South-East Asia and neighbouring countries as well as the Library's major photographic collections, including the Fox Talbot archive of early photography and the Kodak Historic archive.

Additionally, the Visual Arts section has curatorial responsibility for the art work that is displayed throughout the Library's St Pancras site. The majority of these works were acquired or chosen for display by the architect of the St Pancras building in consultation with the British Library Board during the 1980's and 1990's. This group of art is categorised under the collection heading 'British Library Works of Art' or 'BLWA'. There are 143 'BLWA' works including historic portraits of librarians of the British Library, portraits or busts of notable musicians, authors, scientists (Hilary Mantel, Michael Faraday and Anne Frank), and additional works with a literary connection.

The aim of the placement is to undertake further research into the subjects and creators of these works of art, placing them in the historical and contemporary contexts in which they were created and examining their connections to the British Library. This placement will build on work already started by colleagues in the Web and Sound teams to explore the BLWA collections for users and provide new avenues through which to access these collection items. (for example <https://www.bl.uk/events/waves-of-resonance-sound-tours> and <https://www.bl.uk/about-us/our-story/explore-the-building>)

Expected tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this placement will be to undertake art history research into the creators and subjects of the 143 British Library Works of Art (BLWA). This will include:

- Use of printed and online primary and secondary sources to research the works of art (guidance on sources/databases to be used can be provided);
- Writing of object and artist biographies for BLWA's initially in MS Word or Excel (guidance on format and structure will be provided);
- Ingest of information into the catalogue records for individual collection items; requiring use of the Library's collection management database;
- Drafting of longer texts for a selected number of works for an online audience.

Outcomes:

- Enhancement of collection records providing greater access to information for researchers and members of the public through online records.
- Blog posts exploring the BLWA collections, published on the British Library blog pages;
- Label text for online 'collection item' pages to highlight specific items from the larger collection;
- Collaboration with Visual Arts Curator to draft a 'Collection guide' to the BLWA collection.

Training and development opportunities

All placement students are welcome to access the Library's offer of workshops, talks and training. For further details please refer to the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

In addition, this placement project will offer:

- Practical experience of working with historical and contemporary works of art in a large heritage institution. This will include ongoing debates concerning best practice in the display and interpretation of heritage and contemporary art works.
- Training on how to structure research findings, on cataloguing standards and on how to use IAMS, the database used by the Visual Arts team. The placement holder will also receive support and guidance in relation to writing blog posts and producing online content regarding.
- The opportunity to participate in departmental and section meetings. Where possible, visits and tours of other parts of the British Library, including other curatorial teams from the Asian and African Studies department and relevant areas such as conservation will also be arranged.

Required knowledge and skills

Please ensure that you are aware of the general expectations for all applicants, as detailed in the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

For this specific project, the following additional criteria apply:

- High degree of accuracy and attention to detail in inputting data using MS Word and Excel.
- An understanding or experience of undertaking research using archival materials and primary sources (such as newspaper articles, corporate files and artist documentation).
- Graduate or post graduate experience in World History or Art History research would be beneficial.

Application deadline: 5pm on Friday **18 December 2020**

Further information on eligibility, conditions and how to apply is available on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/news/2020/october/phd-placement-adverts-2020>