



## **Researcher: decolonising the Art UK platform**

### **About Art UK**

Art UK is a cultural education charity on a mission to make the art in UK public collections accessible to everyone, for enjoyment, learning and research. We enable global audiences to learn about the nation's art collection by digitising artworks, telling the stories behind the art and creating exciting opportunities for public interaction with art, both online and offline.

We play a major role supporting public art collections by improving their accessibility and sustainability. Our platform currently shows over 280,000 artworks by 50,000 artists, with new content being added each day. It is an ambitious collaboration between 3,300 institutions, making it one of the largest arts partnerships put together in the UK. The Art UK website had 4 million unique visitors in 2021. No other country in the world has a resource like Art UK.

### **Decolonising collections and interpretation.**

The cornerstone of Art UK is a rich aggregate database of artworks in UK public ownership. We enable the discovery and exploration of these records through search tools, curated content and social media.

The UK's art collections can be seen as the product of centuries of colonial history, yet we know there are also many diverse histories to be told through these objects. We face a challenge in effectively allowing those stories to be discovered. Working collaboratively with organisations in the UK heritage sector, we must also address uncomfortable colonial legacies, such as connections to slavery and offensive historic terminology.

Art UK works to address these challenges through our content strategy and approach to collections data, but we know there is more work to be done. While the artworks shown on Art UK are managed collectively by thousands of institutions, we are in a good position to disseminate information to these collection partners and advocate for best practice, especially for smaller organisations who may not have the resources to undertake such activities.

### **Researcher aims and objectives**

Art UK is looking for a researcher to review our content and search tools, and gain an independent opinion on how we should approach decolonising our platform. The researcher will help implement decolonising practice in Art UK's work through providing valuable outside perspective of our public value and our work. This understanding will form the basis of future approaches in Art UK's interpretation of collection data, and will help us achieve a clear definition of what decolonising collections means for Art UK.

With the support of staff at Art UK, the researcher will assess the platform, our approach so far, and will produce a report with suggestions for future activities and development. This may include suggesting technical enhancements or a programme of consultation or collaborative working.

In particular, the researcher will review:

- The searchability and ease of finding resources on Art UK that relate to diverse histories (e.g. [stories](#), [artwork search](#), [learning resources](#), social media)
- How Art UK presents problematic historical language
- Art UK's approach to uncovering links to colonialism and slavery

#### Summary of work required

- Participate in discovery sessions with Art UK staff, including introductory and interim meetings, and deliver a presentation of findings at the end of the process
- Research best practice guidance in the cultural heritage sector, and comparisons with the decolonisation approaches of comparable organisations
- Deliver a written report (to be made publicly available) which includes:
  - o A summary of the review of Art UK, as outlined above
  - o A summary of the current sector best practice
  - o Recommendations for improvements and further actions
- Assist in the production of website content to explain and demonstrate the process of this assignment

Please note that we are not asking the researcher to consider equal, diverse and inclusive recruitment practices at Art UK as this is being evaluated separately.

#### **Proposal to tender**

The consultant's proposal to tender for this work should be no longer than two pages of text (not including a CV, which can also be attached). The tender should include details of the relevant experience and competency possessed by the consultant to undertake the review of Art UK's platform, including the following:

- Essential: understanding of ways in which empire and slavery continue to impact on current UK culture, society and economy
- Essential: current knowledge of museum decolonisation theory and practice, and experience of implementing decolonising/anti-racism practice within a museum/heritage environment
- Essential: experience of gathering and collating information, writing reports, and presenting results

#### **Payment terms**

The fee for this work is £3,000 (+ VAT). The brief includes approximately 10 days of work.

#### **Application process**

Please submit your tender to [recruitment@artuk.org](mailto:recruitment@artuk.org) using the email subject 'Tender for Art UK Decolonisation Research'. Closing date for tenders: **9am 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022**.

#### **Timeframe**

Final report and associated presentation are to be delivered to Art UK by end of August 2022.