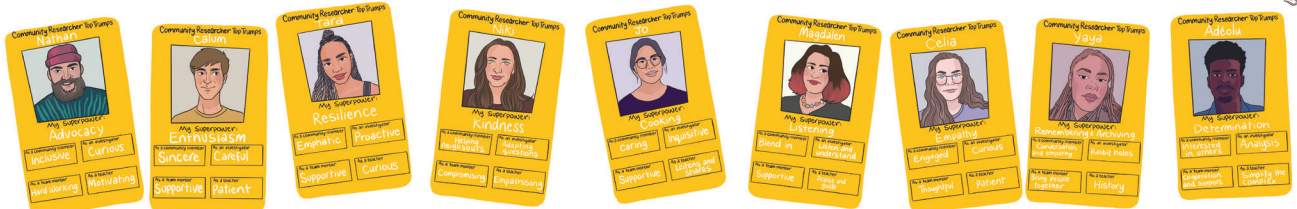


# The Past for the Present: Community Action Research at Dulwich Picture Gallery

Final Report  
March 2023



## The community researcher team



By Adeolu Adeoye, Yaya Clarke, Rowena Hay, Rosemary Lamport, Niki Lavithis, Jo Molina, Nathan Mackie, Celia Morris, Roger Newton, Tara Okeke, Calum Perrin and Magdalen Rubalcava.

# The Past for the Present: Community Action Research at Dulwich Picture Gallery

Adeolu Adeouye, Yaya Clarke, Rowena Hay, Rosemary Lampert, Niki Lavithis, Jo Molina, Nathan Mackie, Celia Morris, Roger Newton, Tara Okeke, Calum Perrin and Magdalen Rubalcava.

March 2023

## Acknowledgements

Shortwork and the community researcher team would like to thank the following people who have been pivotal in making this project the best it can be.

Thanks to the brilliant and supportive team at Dulwich Picture Gallery including Kelly Robinson, Myles Symon, Eduarda Craveiro, Carrie Foulkes, Jane Findlay, Helen Hillyard, Hannah Edwards, Lucy West, and Jennifer Scott.

Thank you to our creative collaborators Janneke van Leewen from The Thinking Eye, Ada Jusic Illustration, and Rachel Waite from Holistic Harmonies.

Special thanks to all those who generously gave up their time and shared their views during the research sessions, and attended and participated in the research celebration/validation event.

Thanks also to Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund, distributed by the Museums Association, who kindly funded the project.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Aims

Founded in 1811, Dulwich Picture Gallery (DPG) was the first purpose-built gallery in the world to open its doors to the public. The Gallery holds a collection of historic paintings of international importance, including over 600 works from Tudor Times to the 19th Century, and famous works from Old Masters such as Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Canaletto and Rubens. In line with the founders' wishes to open up the Gallery collection to a wider audience, the Gallery is proactive in engaging with as many people as possible, of all ages and backgrounds through its programme and engagement activities. However, in the context of rapid change in the demographics of the communities that surround it, the Gallery is seeking new and innovative ways to make the Gallery and the Collection connect and speak to the lives of diverse, contemporary audiences.

In 2021 DPG was awarded funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund to undertake a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project to discover new ways for their Old Masters collection to connect and speak to contemporary audiences. In particular, the project sought to reach out to diverse communities living in the surrounding Boroughs who do not currently visit the Gallery.

The research project builds on a number of initiatives to uncover and share alternative readings of the Gallery collection. These include:

1. A project with young people to develop interpretations of paintings based on their pandemic experiences which are on display alongside curatorial notes on the Gallery walls.
2. Journeys which engaged Community Curators with personal experience of migration to create a special exhibition, animation and spoken word piece exploring the nature of migration from the 17th Century to today.

Through the Past for the Present research project, the Gallery is keen to push this work further, and enable local people to have a say in the way that the collection is displayed, and the topics that are explored. The findings from the research will inform the Galleries public programme, digital content and Gallery 12 display over the next two years, as well as the longer term curatorial research plan.

By employing local people to work as Community Researchers, and to take the lead in shaping the research questions, fieldwork and analysis, the Gallery sought to better understand how they can:

1. **Find ways for people to feel a sense of ownership and belonging in the gallery.**
2. **Consider the stories that are missing in the Gallery and in the narratives told about the building, the history of the collection, and the artworks themselves.**
3. **Re-frame DPG so it speaks to contemporary audiences.**

To carry out this work, DPG worked with Shortwork to support the Community Researchers through a programme of training in Participatory Action Research methods; in their fieldwork with different communities groups across Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham; to make sense of their findings through the analysis of the research data they

collected; and to come up with a set of recommendations for the Gallery in response to their exploratory questions.

## 1.2 Structure of this report

This report is structured around four main sections.

**This first section** outlines the research methods including the rationale for using Participatory Action Research, the training and fieldwork process, and a breakdown of who were engaged in the project.

**The second section** explores the findings from the research including key takeaways from Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark communities, and overall findings organised around three key themes 1) ownership and belonging 2) missing stories and histories 3) re-framing DPG.

**The third** sets out the recommendations to the Gallery made by the Community Researchers based on the research sessions and analysis.

**The fourth** covers the creative methods used to share and validate research findings to those engaged in the research, the Gallery, and wider audiences' including the research poster, finding songs, ideas wheel and celebration event. It also sets out the handover of the research findings to DPG, and their next steps.

## 1.3 Research methods

### Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) refers to a family of methods that seek to put those most affected by a particular topic or issue upfront in the research process. A range of approaches can be used as part of PAR projects including surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, life histories, and creative methods such as photography and film.

The Past for the Present research was based on a group facilitation method called Participatory Appraisal (PA). PA is an action research method that comprises research, learning and collective action. It is based around a set of interactive and highly accessible 'tools' that rely largely on visual methods that can overcome barriers such as formal literacy or numeracy. These 'tools' are used by Community Researchers to facilitate conversations with members of a community around a particular problem or issue. As such PA concentrates on collecting highly qualitative information relating to participant experiences and perceptions, to acknowledge and analyse issues, and plan for change.

The difference between PA and other research or consultation methods can be summarised as a series of 'big shifts' that seek to bridge the divide between those who fund, plan and deliver services and the people who use them. Members of a community, service users or particular audiences are recognised as "experts in their own lives", with local knowledge and experiences crucial to the development of successful and sustainable programmes.

A key strength of PA lies in the recruitment of people who are already embedded within a community as researchers. They bring invaluable local knowledge, and access to a more

diverse range of people gathered through existing networks of family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

At the same time the desired outcomes of a PA project can only be achieved if key stakeholders (including funders and professionals with the resources and power to make things happen) actively support the process. They are needed in order to translate recommendations into real change, to explain where budgetary or other constraints make particular recommendations difficult to implement, and to give feedback to participants and the wider community when change occurs.

## Training

In the Spring of 2022, nine Community Researchers were recruited by the Gallery, using the British Museums' Positive Action Recruitment Roadmap<sup>1</sup>, to work on a freelance basis over a nine month period on the Past for the Present research project.

At the start of the project the researchers took part in six in-person training days. During the training the researchers:

- Worked together to define their ground rules for working together, and hopes for the training and research.
- Explored the origins and ethics of PAR.
- Practised six key research tools including the 'time-line', 'mapping', 'force-field analysis', 'H-form', 'causal-impact diagram', 'spider diagram' and 'graffiti wall'.
- Learned about the three researcher roles - facilitator, observer and anti-saboteur.
- Practised active listening, open questioning and facilitation skills.
- Developed a bank of questions to use during research sessions in the community.

To help familiarise the researchers with the Gallery and the collection, and to support their facilitation and open-questioning skills, they also participated in one day of training in Creative Conversations, delivered by Janneke van Leewen from The Thinking Eye [www.thinkingeye.org/]. Creative Conversations are used in the gallery to engage audiences with paintings, and to encourage them to share their own opinion, stories and impressions - all of which are equally valid.

Two supported research sessions were then organised with local community groups already engaged with the Gallery, so that the researchers could practise the tools, facilitation skills and pilot the research questions.

As a result of this experience the team decided to focus on one key question during their fieldwork; **How can Dulwich Picture Gallery be more relevant to our lives today?** Explored through discussions around three key areas:

1. **Community experiences and perceptions of Dulwich Picture Gallery.**
2. **Community experiences and perceptions of art and culture more widely.**
3. **The stories and issues that are valued by local people.**

The researchers then split into three teams of three, each focusing their fieldwork on one of the Boroughs' surrounding the Gallery - Team Lambeth, Team Lewisham and Team

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Roadmap%20Report%20v5-link.pdf](http://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Roadmap%20Report%20v5-link.pdf)

Southwark. They then planned their research sessions together, based on their knowledge of the area, existing networks and interests.

## Fieldwork

A total number of **229 people were engaged** through **22 research sessions** in venues across the three Boroughs including community centres, schools, health centres, libraries, shopping centres, cafés, and community festivals.<sup>2</sup>

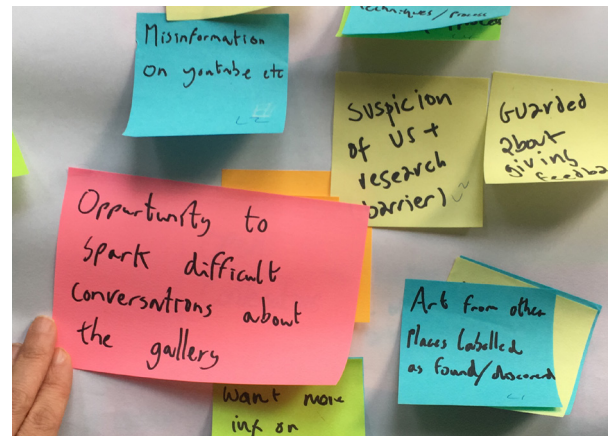


The research sessions involved a diverse range of groups representing different parts of the local community. Precise demographic information is not available<sup>3</sup>, but participants included children, younger, middle aged and older adults; male, female and non-binary people; LGBTQ+ groups; and those from Black, Asian and White ethnic backgrounds.

<sup>2</sup> A map showing all the groups engaged in the project can be found here: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=19sEwZmwAOzLpY2Tz-DAJOLb1mGxcX34&ll=51.47602735720967%2C-0.14475017505757748&z=12>.

<sup>3</sup> The Community Researchers took notes of the demographics of participants as part of their observations. However, responses were low to the diversity monitoring forms that were circulated.

Based on their experience of planning and undertaking their fieldwork, the community researchers drew a time-line of their research journey, including the highs and lows along the way. The time-lines and drawings express the reality of undertaking community research, which is always hard work and often a combination of fun, engaging, enriching, stretching, challenging and frustrating.



## Approach to analysis

Once the fieldwork period was over, the team returned to the training room to analyse their research findings. The data collected during the fieldwork included the sticky notes captured on the tools, combined with observation notes recording what had happened during the sessions, key points and learning. During two days of workshops the research teams worked through three stages of analysis to 'make sense' of the large quantity of data they had collected.

Firstly, each team worked together to get familiar with their data, using the 'rose, thorn, bud' analysis tool. They identified positive "roses," negative "thorns," and opportunity "buds" from across the data set and noted them on pink, blue and green post-it notes so they could be clearly identified.

Secondly, they looked for connections between the different ideas identified through the rose, thorn, bud tool, and used affinity clustering to group them together into like-themes.

Finally, they 'named' each of their clusters so they encapsulated the meaning of the cluster, and re-named them to directly address the key research question 'How can Dulwich Picture Gallery be more relevant to our lives today?'

This analysis forms the basis of the key findings, and recommendations sections below.

## 2. Key findings

This section pulls together the findings from across the three Boroughs, and are organised to help the Gallery to understand how they can:

1. Find ways for people to feel a sense of ownership and belonging in the Gallery;
2. Consider the stories that are missing in the Gallery and in the narratives told about the building, the history of the collection, and the artworks themselves; and
3. Re-frame DPG so it speaks to contemporary audiences.

### 2.1 Ownership and belonging

#### Be proactive in making people feel welcome and at ease

- There are many things that are positive about DPG that make visitors feel welcome and at ease:
  - » The environment is clean and safe.
  - » Staff can be helpful and friendly.
  - » The small-scale of the DPG building makes it less intimidating compared to larger galleries and museums
  - » The gallery spaces are intimate and have a warm ambience.
- Others feel excluded from galleries and museums, including DPG, and feel these spaces are not for them due to perceptions about:
  - » Formal, grand façades, which from the outside can be intimidating and “foreboding.”
  - » The exclusive atmosphere which is perceived to be “too posh.”
  - » The pressure to understand and have a lot of prior knowledge of art
  - » The quiet atmosphere in galleries and the feeling that you “can’t talk.”
  - » Not knowing the “right way” to behave in the gallery space, and the anxiety of getting it wrong and being “told off.”
- Negative past experiences of poor treatments in galleries have a long lasting effect on how welcome visitors feel:
  - » The attitude of staff and volunteers makes the world of difference to how at home visitors feel in the gallery. When staff appear aloof or distant people can feel unwelcome and uncomfortable.
  - » Those unfamiliar with the rules, and particularly the young, felt chastised for example when they were not allowed to sit on the floor, or lean up against the Gallery wall.
  - » Others felt they were treated differently or with hostility because of their age, ethnicity or gender. One shared an example of having been misgendered in another cultural venue.
  - » The lack of diversity of staff and visitors in gallery spaces also impacts on how comfortable visitors feel. Seeing others “like me” in the gallery space is comforting and needed.
- Suggestions to help people feel at ease include:
  - » Putting staff through training so they are friendly and know how to communicate effectively.
  - » Visibly celebrating LGBTQ+ communities.
  - » Recruiting more Black and Asian tour guides.
  - » Celebrating local languages by offering multilingual interpretation.
  - » Diversifying the art and artists presented, as well as topics, that connect with a more diverse audience [see section 2.2 below].



## Make the Gallery building and grounds accessible and comfortable

- Those unable to travel to the Gallery would welcome opportunities to experience the collection online through virtual displays and programming. Overall though, participants in the research saw greater benefits from physically going to the Gallery when compared to online engagement.
- The small scale of the Gallery, and the fact that it doesn't get too busy, were highlighted as positive aspects for visitor comfort and access. However there are a number of barriers to attending the Gallery in-person highlighted through the research. These include:
  - » A lack of public transport links, which particularly impact those with mobility issues.
  - » The need for extended opening hours so visitors can go at different times of day.
  - » The cost of entering DPG and seeing the exhibitions was seen by many as prohibitive.
- Participants in the research recommended a number of strategies to make the Gallery more affordable, and particularly to local audiences who may have less money to spend, including:
  - » Low cost refreshments and/or a lunch room.
  - » Free or discounted previews for locals.
  - » Cheap or free exhibitions on certain days.
  - » Free or affordable entry tickets and activities for families.
  - » Tickets that are valid for longer than a day.
- Physical comfort is also crucial to making gallery spaces accessible.
- Suggestions to improve comfort included:
  - » More seating in the Gallery, more comfortable seating throughout the DPG site, and seating designed with children in mind including small cosy nooks for kids.
  - » A greater number of more accessible toilets, and improvements to existing facilities including the disorientating use of mirrors, low lighting and the height of the soap dispensers.
  - » Better, brighter and if possible more natural lighting in the gallery spaces.
- Particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring that people with disabilities are catered for and looked after in the gallery space so they can use it with comfort and ease. These include:
  - » People with poor mobility for example through the provision of adequate seating, handholds, careful door design, and space to move and store mobility aids.
  - » Blind or partially sighted people, for example through the use of closed captions, tour guides, aids and tactile objects.
  - » Neurodivergent people including those with autism through softened acoustics and the use of calming colours such as green and blue.

## Actively engage with communities locally

- Participants in the research suggested that the DPG build upon and extend their existing community outreach and schools programme, making special efforts to attract more diverse local audiences. Recommendations include:
  - » Take art outside the gallery space through pop-up galleries in community venues such as schools or community centres.

- » Reach out to particular groups including retired and semi-retired people, and LGBTQ+ groups.
  - » Create space for local art and artists.
  - » Host community events and activities at the Gallery.
  - » Programme events that are relevant to the local area for example by exploring local history and sharing stories of Dulwich, Peckham and Herne Hill over time.
  - » Tours of Graffiti art locally that are linked to DPG artworks.
  - » Address political and social issues that are directly relevant to the lives of local people.
- Many participants felt that they did not know what goes on at DPG, particularly younger people, and that a local marketing strategy was needed to get the message out. Suggestions include:
    - » Making use of 'word of mouth' through a network of local DPG ambassadors.
    - » Targeted, localised campaigns on social media in order to engage younger demographics.

## 2.2 Missing histories, narratives and stories

### Reflect South London's diverse communities

- A key finding from the research is the need to address the lack of diversity. This includes the diversity of DPG staff and visitors, but also the people represented in the artwork on display which is currently White and Western Centric.
  - Participants in the research suggested that more should be done to centre Black art and culture, Asian art and craft traditions including ceramics and fabrics, works by Queer and LGBTQ+ people, artists from working-class backgrounds, disabled and women artists, art by children and young people.
- The curation of more diverse art and artists should be informed by an awareness of intersectionality and the fact that identity consists of multiple, intersecting factors, including gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and religion.
  - This could be achieved by making a clear pathway for local artists from diverse backgrounds to engage with DPG and exhibit their work, and by involving people with lived experience in curation and programming.

### Historicise the Gallery, the artists and their work

- Participants in the research would like to know more about the history of the Gallery, the artists and their work. In particular, participants see an opportunity for DPG to retell histories that have been taught badly, or have been suppressed in the past.
- They would like to find out more about the social, economic and political contexts in which DPG came into being, and in which artists worked. These include:
  - » Explorations of the [potentially] problematic pasts of the DPG founders and patrons, the Gallery building, and the collection on display. For example, their links to slavery and colonialism.
  - » The real stories of artists, including problematic histories, and how their work was shaped by their lives
  - » The darker stories that surround particular artworks or artists that shine a light on a particular time in history.
- The telling of stories that have been

missing from official histories would also be welcomed including the untold stories of:

- » Women
  - » Working-class lives
  - » People of Colour
  - » Queer and LGBTQ+ people
  - » Children and young people
- History could also be drawn out through comparisons of artists and artwork across time, and through the exploration of themes that have contemporary and historic resonance such as:
    - » Slavery
    - » Colonialism
    - » Migration
    - » The history of food and food traditions
    - » Stories of freedom and freedom fighting
    - » Otherness and othering
  - Tapping into diverse histories, stories and folklore is another way for visitors of diverse backgrounds to see, in the gallery space, their own culture and traditions reflected back at them. These could be explored through programming that taps into:
    - » Ancestry
    - » Pageantry
    - » Legends, myths and riddles children's stories and games
    - » Cultural traditions and festivals such as Harvest Moon, Halloween and Christmas
- Address live political, social and environmental issues**
- Participants highlighted some of the live political and social issues that impact the world and our lives today, and could be reflected and explored in the Gallery space. These include stories about:
    - » War, particularly the Ukraine War
    - » Peace
    - » Migration, refugees and especially unaccompanied minors
    - » Slavery - historical and current
    - » Breakdown in political leadership
    - » Alternative political models
    - » Free speech
    - » Cost of living crisis
    - » Consumerism and greed
    - » The gap between rich and poor
    - » The reality of racism
    - » The targeting of Black people by the police
    - » The Windrush scandal
    - » Female empowerment
    - » Violence against women
    - » Digitisation and new technologies
  - The importance of protecting the natural world was also highlighted as a key area to tackle through explorations of:
    - » Seasonal changes in nature
    - » Changes in English landscapes over time
    - » The climate crisis and biodiversity loss
    - » The transition to green energy
    - » Sustainable artistic practices
  - Health and well-being was also spotlighted as important including:
    - » Mental health, including stories that normalise mental health issues that are common
    - » Teenage health, and particularly mental health
    - » Child health, including children with downs-syndrome.
    - » Neurodiversity
    - » The impact of COVID on people's lives
    - » Eating disorders and body shape
    - » Lack of funding in the NHS
    - » Death and dying
    - » Miscarriage
    - » Health inequalities and particularly infant deaths amongst minority groups.

- As was the celebration of carers including:
  - » NHS workers
  - » Mothers and single parents

## 2.3 Re-framing DPG

### Find ways to spice up DPG

- The experience and perception of galleries as “boring and tedious” is a key barrier to engagement for some.
  - In the words of one community researcher, DPG needs to find ways to “spice up” the Gallery and to create a more informal, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere that will draw people into the gallery space. Suggestions include:
    - » Late night openings with local celebrities and artists.
    - » Dog friendly days and/or experiences with animals.
    - » Non-art focused events such as live performances, music, food events and gaming nights.
  - As well as activities that tap-into hobbies and interests such as:
    - » Cooking and seasonal food
    - » Gardening
    - » Holidays, travel and international experiences
    - » Transport including buses and trains
  - DPG’s’ current programme of family workshops and activities were highlighted as a strength. Participants would like more events in this model that support families and friends to spend time together.
  - More could also be made of the green space outside of the Gallery which may have less barriers to entry than the DPG building [see section 2.1 above].
- Recommendations include:
    - » Integration of a pond and/or nature area
    - » Having more exhibitions / interactive works outside
    - » Creating space for children to play
  - The Gallery could also learn from other places that audiences go to experience art and culture, and explore what makes them feel engaged and at home in those places. This includes other cultural institutions such the Cutty Sark, Natural History Museum, Horniman, and the Young Vic.
  - As well as particular exhibitions that they have enjoyed such as:
    - » The Life and Work of Frida Kahlo
    - » Africa Fashion
    - » Basquiat: Boom for Real
    - » Reframed: The Woman in the Window
  - This might mean expanding conventional ideas of where art and culture is consumed. For example, the young people engaged in the project highlighted a large number of places that they feel at ease including:
    - » Local parks
    - » Funfairs
    - » The skate-park at the Southbank
    - » Peckhamplex
    - » Pop Brixton
  - Inspiration could also be found from the art and culture that audiences are engaged in outside of the gallery space. These include:
    - » Particular genres such as crime drama, science fiction, docuseries, comics and graphic novels
    - » Non-fiction writers such as Akala, Bell Hooks and Maya Angelou
    - » Fiction writers such as Ruth Ozeki, Khaled Hosseini and Laline Paull

- » Musicians such as Raligh Ritchie
- » Theatre such as The Colour Purple
- » Films such as Call Me by Your Name and After Love
- » TV series such as Top Boy and Ru Paul's Drag Race

### **Strengthen and diversify the DPG collection and offer**

- The incorporation of different art forms and mediums was also seen as a key way to enliven the gallery collection. Suggestions include:
    - » Modern and contemporary art from different schools
    - » Landscape and townscape painting
    - » Drawing
    - » Printmaking
    - » Photography
    - » Street Art
    - » Ceramics
    - » Fashion, fabric and jewellery design
  - As well as the use of performing arts to engage audiences such as:
    - » Dance
    - » Film
    - » Theatre
    - » Poetry
    - » Opera
  - The integration of interactive art was also highlighted for example through:
    - » Interactive workshops and games.
    - » Interactive outdoor artworks that allow for physical exploration and discovery, particularly for children.
    - » More audio content and webinars exploring the collection.
    - » Virtual and on-line spaces that can be accessed off-site.
    - » Immersive audio-visual experiences.
    - » The use of tactile props and objects.
    - » Digital photo frames or boxes.
- ### **Promote opportunities for learning and discovery**
- Participants in the research valued art and culture for its role in helping them to grow and learn through:
    - » The discovery of new artists.
    - » Learning about the process of creation, and being inspired by the talent and ability on show.
    - » The opportunity to learn about different cultures.
    - » To open up an awareness of new perspectives on the world we live in.
    - » The opportunity to explore individual relationships to art and art-making.
  - Participants in the research were supportive of the schools programme, which could be extended through:
    - » Summer camps where children can participate in longer workshops.
    - » Programmes that explore children's storytelling or young people's views on life, home and school.
  - Storytelling was identified as a useful tool to engage people of all ages to "help us grow and make us feel good."
  - Stories that relate to real human experiences could be used to bring the collection alive around some of the issues identified in section 2.2 above.
  - The community researchers felt that Creative Conversations could also be used as a key tool to explore these issues.
  - Building on the existing outreach programme, participants highlighted the importance of designing engaging sessions of this type for groups who need support and could benefit, for example those with dementia and their carers.

## 3. Recommendations

### 3.1 Defining recommendations

Having established their findings through the collation and analysis workshop, the researchers began to think about the recommendations they would make to the Gallery. These were beginning to emerge organically from the findings.

As with the findings, there was considerable overlap between the three groups in terms of ideas and opportunities. Recommendations were made across the four broad areas of interest to the gallery:

**A new gallery 12 display**  
**New pilot public programmes**  
**Digital engagement**  
**Wider gallery recommendations**

The tables below set out these recommendations as defined by each of the Borough community research teams, as areas for exploration by the Gallery for the second phase of the project and beyond.

It is recognised that not all suggestions will be feasible or actionable at this point. With this in mind, there is no hierarchy of recommendations, although those in bold indicate the ones which resonated most highly with the researchers.



### 3.2 Team Lambeth recommendations

New pilot public programmes	A new gallery 12 display	Digital engagement	Wider gallery recommendations
<p>Connecting DPG internal space with external spaces through community events for families and pets.</p> <p><b>Wellness programmes e.g. yoga in the garden that refer to harder themes that may come up in the art such as mental health, miscarriage, racism, death and other present political issues.</b></p> <p>Strengthen links to the Tessa Jowell Centre.</p> <p>Launch temporary exhibitions with a series of live satellite events (Lates, drop in craft sessions).</p> <p>Community forums where DPG offer can be co-curated with local people (esp. local artists).</p>	<p>Younger exhibition advisors from the tri-borough area.</p> <p><b>Exhibition on the ‘forgotten’ POC communities in South London.</b></p> <p>Jewellery exhibition / crafts outside of oil paintings.</p> <p>Spotlighting local/emerging artists (PAID) through social media call outs.</p> <p>Multimedia display launched through a late event</p> <p><b>Social history project that looks at the lives of working class people from London pre-gentrification. Bring awareness to wider Dulwich population outside of White and rich inc. the Kingswood Estate, Albrighton Estate, Lordship Lane Estate &amp; Dawson’s Heights.</b></p> <p><b>Exhibition that looks at landscapes in the collection. Commission a photographer to capture the same landscape today to look at the changing environment.</b></p>	<p>Use online platform to speak honestly about the colonial history of the paintings.</p> <p>Online collective presence for 16-30 year olds, newsletter, discounted tickets and shop.</p> <p><b>Engage with younger audience through Instagram.</b></p> <p>Virtual tours of exhibition and/or the Gallery.</p> <p>Engage with the DPG typeface and use brand assets on social media.</p>	<p><b>Engage with TFL / private transport companies to provide subsidised direct links for people within the tri-borough area to get to and from the DPG.</b></p> <p>OS maps or other offering that connects people to the local community.</p> <p>More amenities and facilities that are accessible &amp; make the DPG feel more usable (e.g.. seating, bins, toilets)</p> <p>Could the DPG ‘twin’ itself - or set up a consortium with other South London galleries/art spaces to create subsidised offers for local people. For example South London Gallery, Peckham Platform (art collective) and Horniman Museum.</p>

### 3.3 Team Southwark recommendations

New pilot public programmes	A new gallery 12 display	Digital engagement	Wider gallery recommendations
<p>Like book clubs - art clubs!</p> <p>Eating food related to an art work.</p> <p><b>Soundscaping or designed walks of local community that include DPG &amp; other local organisations.</b></p> <p>Games nights, gamified challenges etc.</p> <p>Use of stories, current &amp; historical: people love stories behind the art/artists &amp; personal / historical stories.</p> <p>After school activities.</p> <p>Take portable art / learning to community centres like a travelling library.</p> <p>Intergenerational.</p> <p>Address the big themes! Racial equality, politics / current affairs, diversity, sexuality, climate &amp; mental health.</p> <p>Link to nature &amp; gardening.</p> <p>Workshop art techniques &amp; processes.</p>	<p>Present local artists (more in the style of A. Daley).</p> <p><b>Spotlight on local people (history, culture etc.)</b></p> <p>Stories of migration/immigrants (Chinese community).</p> <p>Interactivity / hands on props. incorporate movement/workshops/ treasure hunts.</p> <p>Artists process.</p> <p>Performing arts, including dancing, linked to paintings/ theme.</p> <p>Talks with artists.</p>	<p>QR codes for explanation in different languages.</p> <p>Photography &amp; film (stop frame).</p> <p>Physical &amp; digital coming together.</p> <p>Interactive.</p> <p>VR ... Van Gogh</p> <p>Augmented reality.</p> <p>Online offer to engage those who can't visit in person. For example film workshops &amp; uploads.</p> <p>Committing more to social media. Consider global social media platforms.</p> <p>Gaming apps / phones linked to work.</p> <p><b>App usability ... child friendly? or code activated?</b></p> <p>Clearer brand identity.</p>	<p>Diversity in gift shop (cards representing different ethnicities) use local artists / makers.</p> <p><b>If you want DPG to be relevant to locals you need to provide affordable opportunities. Discount for local postcodes.</b></p> <p>Provide less formal cafe space / eating area.</p> <p><b>People find guides &amp; explanations invaluable - more opportunities for this? Gallery assistants to be more approachable &amp; happy to discuss.</b></p> <p>Families feeling welcome. Dog friendly sessions!</p> <p><b>Social events &amp; engagement that all types of visitors feel welcome to - link to local events.</b> More community open days for specific groups.</p> <p><b>Partner up with local organisations e.g. Horniman.</b></p> <p>Have days where you're open late (7pm weekdays are a good time for people)</p>



### 3.4 Team Lewisham recommendations

New pilot public programmes	A new gallery 12 display	Digital engagement	Wider gallery recommendations
<p>Workshops inc. multimedia to change idea of DPG being just about paintings.</p> <p>School trips w/ opportunity to display their own art.</p> <p>Outdoor performances &amp; meditation.</p> <p>Community art sessions.</p> <p><b>DPG version of the Summer Exhibition with local artists.</b></p> <p><b>Local artist peer support group to share work, give &amp; receive feedback.</b> To build a hub to integrate artists into everyday life of DPG.</p> <p>Events around diversity inc. focused days for Black history, Disabled history, Pride, International Women's Day.</p> <p><b>Workshops that address colonial origins of art.</b></p> <p>More info/workshops about process of creating art.</p> <p><b>Open introductory event for people to ask questions about DPG.</b></p>	<p><b>Debunking myths &amp; missing information about DPG's art/art more broadly.</b></p> <p>Art by children, trans people, Queer, Non-white, disabled people.</p> <p><b>Exhibition of women's lived experiences inc. social issues. e.g. domestic abuse &amp; mental health.</b></p> <p>Relationship between painting &amp; multimedia (sound, film, performance).</p> <p><b>Exhibition of art by children, stretching back in history.</b></p> <p><b>Exhibition of art by local artists.</b></p> <p>Exhibition of outsider art &amp; the relationship between outsider art &amp; institutional art.</p> <p>Exhibition of non-European art from same era as DPG collection inspired by local immigrant communities.</p> <p>DPG existing art w/ queer &amp; gender themes.</p> <p><b>Exhibition that emphasises process of art creation</b></p>	<p>Online tours &amp; exhibitions.</p> <p>Content-podcast e.g. <b>interviews w/artists</b>, soundscapes - what to expect in DPG, audio exhibition.</p> <p>Library of recordings (lectures &amp; workshops)</p> <p>AR to offer extra information - digital treasure hunt via an app, e.g.. matching descriptions to paintings</p> <p>The collection online</p> <p><b>Digital intro to staff highlighting diversity (videos).</b></p> <p>Online paint by numbers w/diverse/seasonal themes. Digital stickers that are shareable on social media.</p> <p><b>Video of Journey to DPG as an access tool.</b></p> <p>Online tours &amp; exhibitions.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing training &amp; conversations about disability, refugees, LGBTQ+, trauma informed approaches, &amp; religion.</b></p> <p>Create an access guide for the gallery.</p> <p>Late or early openings.</p> <p><b>Cheaper - tickets that last a year.</b></p> <p><b>Relaxed sessions that feel less formal / stuff - maybe with music.</b></p> <p>More comfy seating.</p> <p>Involve communities in DPG decisions.</p> <p><b>Staff encouraged conversations w/visitors. Questions by art to invite discussion/talking.</b></p>

## 4. Sharing the findings

### 4.1 Creative outputs

#### Research poster and illustrations

In order to communicate the research findings and recommendations effectively, both to those who participating in the research sessions, but also to wider audiences including DPG, the team worked with Ada Jusic [https://www.adajusic.com/], an illustrator and animator, who produced a research poster based on the initial analysis carried out by the community researcher teams.



The poster was printed and displayed as part of a celebration and validation event that was held at DPG on the evening of 23rd February 2023. The community researchers were on hand to talk to guests about the key findings around the poster.

## Singing the findings

Alongside this poster, the team worked with Calum Perrin [<https://www.calumperrin.com>], one of our community researchers who is also a musician, and Rachel Waite [<https://www.holistic-harmonies.com/>], a singing for wellbeing facilitator, to compose a trio of 'findings songs' that encapsulate three key takeaways from the research.

**"Let me in"**

**"Show me, me"**

**"Don't be afraid of the difficult"**

The songs were shared at the celebration event in the Gallery's mausoleum. The guests were invited to join in and learn the songs so they could let the meaning and significance of the research sink in through the experience of singing.



© Photo by Graham Turner

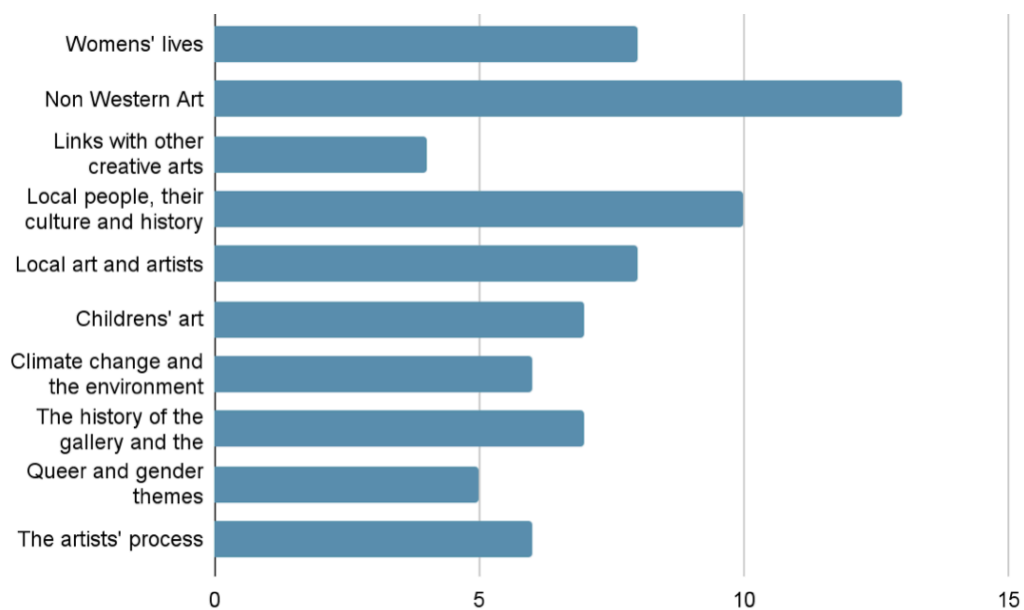
## Ideas wheel

The team also facilitated a drop-in activity around an 'ideas wheel' where guests could vote for their favourite thematic idea to be explored in the curation of the Gallery, read the researchers' ideas for exhibitions and programming, and add their own.



© Photo by Graham Turner

The results of the voting are presented in the chart below, and show a preference for exhibitions exploring non-western art; local people, their culture and history; womens' lives; local art and artists; the history of the gallery and the collection; and childrens' art.



## 4.2 Handover and next steps

### Short term impacts

The research will be shared with the project team at DPG and will be used to develop new programming, a new Gallery 12 display and online content which will be delivered in the second year of the project between April 2023 and March 2024.

New pilot public programmes	A new gallery 12 display	Digital engagement
<p>DPG will be exploring some of the themes highlighted in the research to pilot and develop new free storytelling sessions for families and thematic tours for adults. The Gallery aims to work with practitioners with lived experience and/or those who live locally, and will speak to and gather feedback from key community stakeholders as part of both the development and delivery phase of the programme.</p>	<p>DPG will stage the first in a series of displays dedicated to amplifying local voices and introducing new perspectives into the museum. The 'Past for the Present' display will be developed in direct response to some of the ideas and themes proposed during the research phase. Current plans are focused on a community-generated artwork, which grows over the duration of the display.</p>	<p>Digital outputs will focus on developing digital content across our social media channels, with a focus on amplifying, sharing and opening dialogue with new and existing digital audiences in response to our collection, new programming and Gallery 12 display. DPG will be working with a digital consultant to help shape these plans.</p>

### Longer term aims

#### Programming and curatorial research strategy

Following the first 'Past for the Present' display, DPG aim to build an ongoing programme of Gallery 12 Displays that responds to the ideas and themes proposed during the research phase. This will inform the development of a multi-year curatorial research strategy, built upon the findings of the community researchers. The focus will be on researching DPG paintings through the lens of key themes and issues raised by the community researchers.

The ultimate aim is to generate new research and content that can be used to inform new programming, interpretation and digital outputs. This research will also create space to explore the ideas and themes proposed within the main exhibition and engagement programmes.

## Organisational impacts

In addition to shaping the outputs in year 2 the research report will be shared internally with the wider Gallery team and Board of Trustees, and internal cross-departmental groups such as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and the Future Plan project team. This process will ensure the wider learnings from the report are reviewed with relevant actions being added to the Gallery Future Plan and the organisational Equality Action Plan. Current proposed actions include developing a long-term training and development plan for Visitor Experience.

## Continuing Participatory Action Research at DPG

The aim is to continue to use Participatory Action Research as a tool for continuing to gather feedback with and for our community audiences. DPG will be exploring developing a longer-term community panel and are hoping to be able to utilise some of the existing community research team as part of the Gallery's Future Plan developments. Subject to applying for further funding DPG would like to develop the project as a model of good practice which can be shared across the cultural and third sector as well as locally in SE London.

In Year 2 the Gallery will deliver four Action Learning Sets for the sector focused on utilising participatory practices in museums and galleries, and will be continuing to explore opportunities with Shortwork to share and disseminate the project.





Action Research  
for Social Change

[rowena@shortwork.org.uk](mailto:rowena@shortwork.org.uk)  
07961974581

63 Blundell Street  
Liverpool L1 0AJ  
[www.shortwork.org.uk](http://www.shortwork.org.uk)