

M4C DTP Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Marketing Template

Project Title			
Imperial Connections: Re-examining Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire			
LEAD INSTITUTION			
Name of HEI institution	University of Birmingham		
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION			
Name of organisation	National Trust		
Website URL	https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/		
THE RESEARCH PROJECT			
<i>(Max 750 words)</i>			
<p>The ‘Imperial Connections’ doctoral project will explore and illuminate how Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire has been shaped by connections to, and has in its turn shaped understandings of, empire. It will be supervised by Kate Smith (University of Birmingham), Jane Gallagher (National Trust) and Clare Anderson (University of Leicester). Completing this doctoral work between 2019 and 2022 is particularly timely. In completing the project you will directly contribute to the National Trust’s reinstatement and reinterpretation of the ‘Eastern Collection’ at Kedleston, which is due to take place in 2022 as part of the National Trust’s National Public Programme theme on India and Colonialism.</p> <p>Country houses have traditionally been regarded as icons of a certain kind of Britishness, represented and understood as ‘power houses’, which have shaped Britain’s island story. More recently, work has begun to revise such histories by illuminating how colonial and global connections distinctly changed country houses over the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries (Barczewski 2014; Dresser and Hann, 2014; Finn and Smith, 2018).</p> <p>Kedleston Hall exists as a prime example of Robert Adam’s neo-classical architectural style and the ambition of his eighteenth-century projects, which significantly changed Britain’s architecture. It is Kedleston’s role as an important marker in the emergence of a coherent ‘British’ aesthetic in the eighteenth century which has tended to be the focus of histories of the house (Harris, 1987). Nevertheless, the house also played an important role in imperial projects, and particularly Britain’s empire on the Indian subcontinent. ‘Imperial Connections’ seeks to uncover these links, particularly those created as a result of George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston’s (1859-1925) tenure as Viceroy of India between 1899 and 1905. The project will reveal how the accumulation and display of Lord Curzon’s ‘Eastern Collection’ of objects from China, Japan, Burma, Thailand, Afghanistan, Persia, Egypt, Turkey, India and Tibet, constructed understandings of empire in the early twentieth century.</p> <p>‘Imperial Connections’ will provide the first systematic history of Lord and Lady Curzon’s ‘Eastern Collection’, including its acquisition, objects, their movement from India to Britain and from London to Derbyshire, and its curation and display. It will ask, how did the ‘Eastern Collection’ shape understandings of empire in early twentieth-century Britain? More detailed research questions to be addressed include: Where and how were the objects that make up the ‘Eastern Collection’ acquired? How did such modes of acquisition shape the meaning of the collection? What is the provenance and significance of the objects that make up the ‘Eastern Collection’? What are the material histories of the objects that make up the ‘Eastern Collection’? How was the collection transported from India to Britain and how did such mobility shape the meaning of the collection? How did the Victoria and Albert Museum display the collection at the</p>			

Bethnal Green Branch Museum in the early twentieth century? How was the collection redisplayed at Kedleston? What conceptions of empire did such displays contribute to? How did this display shape the meaning of the collection?

In answering these questions, the project will contribute to three key areas of historical enquiry. First, it will provide a new understanding of Lord and Lady Curzon's time in India by illuminating their prolonged engagement with collecting practices and material culture. Second, the project will offer a means of changing current meanings and interpretations of Kedleston Hall by reinserting the imperial histories that were key to its development and shifting position. Finally, it will build on and contribute to the dynamic field of global material culture history and histories of imperial collecting and display by tracking a diverse collection through a variety of rich archives.

To complete this doctoral project, you will engage with archives at the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Library, National Archives and privately within Kedleston Hall. You will also be required to closely interpret and handle the objects within the 'Eastern Collection' and thus will significantly profit from on-site access to Kedleston Hall and close collaboration with staff and volunteers at the National Trust. You will benefit from accessing a range of expertise both from your academic supervisors (Kate Smith and Clare Anderson) and your National Trust supervisor (Jane Gallagher). You will also have access to a range of National Trust courses and have the potential to secure an additional 6-month internship with the Trust to complete initiatives connected to exhibitions, interpretation and outreach.

If you are interested in pursuing a PhD in histories of empire, families, objects and collections and want to engage with a high-profile heritage site, please get in touch.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

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