

Come dine
in Blue



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Bringing people together and closer to themselves through the arts



Come dine in Blue

A participatory art project by Tisna Westerhof & Cristiana Bottigella

Editor Frederica Agbah
Illustrations by Tisna Westerhof

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Come Dine in Blue is an art project bringing together more than 100 Lewisham residents with a migrant background to create a Blue-and-White dining room installation that tells personal and collective stories of identity and belonging, redefining heritage and celebrating different cultures and the journey to Lewisham.

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Introduction

by Cristiana Bottigella
and Tisna Westerhof



How do you develop a diverse and inclusive heritage in a super-diverse urban landscape which is the result of people's mobility, migrations and displacement?

We hope that the Come Dine in Blue publication will help give voice and representation to some of those people who have been excluded from the historical heritage records and that it will bring a new perspective on the idea of what heritage in Lewisham today is.

The purpose of the publication is to document and amplify the findings of the Come Dine in Blue art project by making them widely available and extending its legacy beyond the timeframe of the final exhibition, held in hARTslane Gallery (London) in September 2022 as part of the Lewisham London Borough of Culture Festival. Ultimately, we hope that it will illustrate a new community understanding of what heritage is in Lewisham.

Come Dine in Blue was a year-long participatory art programme aiming to investigate and bring to light the diversity of cultural heritage in



Lewisham, giving voice to five different groups of people who left their country to find new homes in the UK: the Indo-Chinese and the Latin-American communities of New Cross; first and third generation African and Afro-Caribbeans and Middle Eastern refugees.

Led by Tisna, known for her Delft Blue works about identity and belonging, we have collaborated with artists and social workers to engage 100 participants from Lewisham, the "Blue Borough", providing them with a creative outlet to come together and tell their stories of cultural identity, heritage & migration using Blue-and-White decorative techniques.

Originating in China, the Blue-and-White ceramics travelled the world. During the workshops, the participants have learned how to visualise their stories and domestic traditions in Blue-and-White using various craft techniques: pottery, embroidery, screenprinting,

papier-mache and collage. Widely collected and showcased at institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and The British Museum in London, the Blue-and-White ceramic is an important and recognisable element of British and Commonwealth heritage, which in this project and publication is used as a visual metaphor about movement travel, and as a unifier. For us, the Blue-and-White is a symbol of how heritage is the result of multifarious cultural inputs and contributions.

By positioning people as experts in their own heritage, through self-narrating, documenting in print and recording stories and memories that would otherwise be lost, the project had the ambition to reconsider who defines heritage. Lewisham is the 15th most ethnically diverse local authority in England, and two out of every five residents are from a black and minority ethnic background. Diversity and integration have been a priority for Lewisham Council, community organisations and residents who have campaigned to nominate Lewisham the first Borough of Sanctuary in England.





Exploration of the movement of people to Britain (and specifically Lewisham) across the ages has made us who we are – as individuals and as a nation- and was one of the main strands of the Lewisham Borough of Culture 2022 programme. Migration remains a pressing contemporary issue at the centre of polarised political and online debate.

Working on this publication has allowed us to deepen the research in a way that wouldn't be possible to convey through the art making process alone, and has allowed us to investigate oral history in Lewisham with the backup of an historical, anthropological and academic perspective, interviews and poetry.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants, the community groups and organisations and artists and academics who took part and collaborated in the workshops, exhibition and this publication. Two digital animations and a programme of educational activity have helped communicate the content in different ways, to reach different audiences.

The Come Dine in Blue project was kindly supported by Arts Council England and Lewisham Council, whilst The Lottery Heritage Fund provided us with the resources to produce this book, both as a hard copy and a digital file that will be available to download for free from hARTslane's website.



Foreword to Come Dine in Blue

Written by Frederica Agbah,
photographer, filmmaker
and visual artist



Ceramics, making, painting and illustration, colour palette, symbolism, language, diaspora, heritage, lived experience, dialogue, rituals, tradition, exchange, community, food, longing and belonging. All combine to create a shared narrative around a single theme, the colour blue.

The Come Dine in Blue workshops highlight the ever-changing nature of life in the UK for new entrants, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and offered an opportunity to gather socially, engage in mixed media art practises (often an entirely new experience for the project's beneficiaries), relax in a communal space, create, construct, and embellish, discuss the complexities, the everyday routine, and the moments of joy found amongst the challenges of life in a new country. To spend uninterrupted time as humans 'being' rather than just doing.

Although some diaspora cling to their heritage with a fierce determination, sometimes to the extent of accentuating rituals and social norms far beyond modern practices in the homeland, others feel pressure to assimilate and cast aside family and cultural traditions in favour of those of the host country, this is often an act of survival rather than subjugation as was the case with some of the Windrush Generation and many African and Asian migrants who were invited to Britain in the 1950's and 1960's to support the motherland in its quest for skilled labour, only to find themselves unwelcome and unwanted on arrival.

My own parents felt similar pressure to become more English, leading me to grow up in a predominantly white area without a mother tongue, no real knowledge of my extended family 'back home' or my cultural heritage until we visited Ghana on the cusp of my adolescence. Arriving in the scorching, lush green capital, Accra via Moscow (courtesy of Aeroflot, Russia's national airline), was the definition of culture shock, even eclipsing my first taste of haggis at the dining table of my Glaswegian auntie.

During my upbringing there was constant talk of returning 'back home' with the trappings of success; furniture remained wrapped in plastic, appliances constantly serviced in order to remain 'good as new'. This was common in many African and Caribbean households. My parents archived clothes and housewarming gifts such as Spode's Felspar blue and white porcelain, the precursor to British bone 'China' all kept pristine and in tissue paper the idea being that these status symbols would eventually be shipped to Ghana accompanying them on their triumphant return to the homeland. But for my parents and many others, life, toil and child rearing set them on an entirely different course, the respectable retirement in the sun failing to materialise.

As editor of this publication, I welcomed the opportunity to explore and interrogate the lived experience of a younger generation, learning how they position themselves in a





society that often observes them through a monochrome lens, and rushes to categorise and pigeonhole rather than view young black people as individuals.

Jada Perry and Fiona Quadri, members of the Be Seen Be Heard black artists collective, are talented and relevant emerging multidisciplinary artists in their own right. Both come from a mixed heritage which includes Ghana, Austria, Nigeria and Jamaica with a rich seam of family and cultural tradition. In their joint interview conducted on the WhatsApp cross platform instant messaging application, they discuss what heritage, family and culture mean to them, the significance of the colour blue and the importance of the Lewisham borough in their daily life and art practice. Both are active citizens who play a keen role in championing the place they call home.

It is interesting how we are often assumed to have in depth knowledge of the main tenets and symbols of our heritage, but this is not always the case, as highlighted by Alice Qianhui Sun @alice.artroom when discussing how she first heard about Chinese blue and white porcelain. For her it was through a contemporary pop song made famous by Taiwanese singer songwriter Jay Chou.

Alice is an international student and visual artist who for the last four years has called Lewisham home. Using oral history techniques and transcribed verbatim, her interview was



conducted on campus at Goldsmiths University of London, a key stakeholder in Lewisham. Alice is proud to call herself a 'Miserable Chef' a moniker given to her by her flatmates who observe her bastardising traditional Chinese cuisine with western ingredients, often involving tomato ketchup. In the final analysis I can only conclude that this signifies that Alice is a typical student.

Father Grant Bolton-Debbage is the recently appointed Vicar of All Saints Church in New Cross. He is a refreshing and much welcomed addition to the Lewisham borough, a combination of youthful exuberance, fearlessness, and a steely determination to get things done.

Fr. Grant has a sensitive and insightful regard for his congregation, the local community and those in it, irrespective of whether or not they have faith. He brings a renewed enthusiasm and a unique perspective to the borough. Originally from Norfolk and educated at Durham University where he read Theology, he has links to Lewisham through his grandmother who is a local resident.

The Come Dine in Blue project, accompanying workshops and indeed, this publication, presented the opportunity to gather a diverse audience around a well-known cultural motif, the blue and white ceramic. When we take the time to reflect properly, our commonalities are revealed to have far more significance than our differences.

White is the absence of colour, but when paired alongside blue, a whole world opens up and comes to life. In this context, as reflected by both Fiona Quadri and Jada Perry and in the lyrics of Blue and White Porcelain by Jay Chou, blue and white becomes multifaceted, filled with promise, filled with freedom, filled with hope.





Cultural Heritage As Living Process. The "Come And Dine In Blue" Project Between Craft-Art And Community Engagement

Written by Massimiliano Mollona,
writer, filmmaker and anthropologist

The "Come Dine in Blue" project by Tisna Westerhof and Cristiana Bottigella is a community art project that brings together the residents of Lewisham, London, through a series of arts and craft workshops using blue and white decorative techniques. The outputs of the project were displayed at the Blue-and-White dining room installation which opened at the hARTslane gallery in New Cross, in September 2022. As well as celebrating Lewisham's multicultural heritage, the project activated the borough's diverse social constituencies, through a dispersed, durational, and relational art process skilfully crafted by Tisna Westerhof and Cristiana Bottigella based on their bold artistic and curatorial vision.



The motive of the blue and white is a central inspiration for Westerhof's own artistic practice, specifically in her craft art, as well as a reflection on her Dutch identity. Deft blue is the colour of the tin-glazed pottery crafted in the city of Delft, in Netherlands in the 1500 and since then, the marker of Dutch identity. As the Come Dine in Blue project sets up to show, the history of blue and white porcelain, does not pertain to one country only, but instead, reflects the history of early globalization as well as of that of imperial Europe. Underglaze blue had been used in the Middle East as early as the 9th century – the epicentre of production was in Basra, Iran. Cobalt had been used in Chinese ceramicware as early as the Warring States periods (475 – 221 BC) but it was only in the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) that blue-and-white porcelain was first produced. As the cobalt pigment for the blue begun to be exported from Persia, blue and white imitative wares emerged across the world, in Middle East, Asia (especially Japan, Korea and China) and Europe. In the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company, the infamous corporate army of the Dutch empire, responsible for plunders and slavery across much of Asia and Africa during the co-called "Dutch Golden Age", controlled the trade of blue cobalt, of Chinese porcelain and of the chinoiserie that would later adorn the middle-class homes of Europe's industrial centres. Hence, the association of blue and white porcelain with Dutch identity. Anthropologist Michael Taussig reminds us, that colour marks the intersection between spirituality and materiality in human societies¹. Indeed, the

history of blue and white is the history of the global flow of a precious colour pigment connecting different world's economies, art practices and cosmologies. Blue and white became a central trope of Westerhof's art precisely because of its association with Dutch's culture and history and in relation to her experience of migrating to London and setting up a multi-cultural family (Westerhof's husband is second generation West Indian of Jamaican heritage). In the current era of resurgent nationalism, which implies the containment and ossification of cultures and national identities – as in the colours on national flags - did she identify with the 'typical' blue and white marker of Dutch personhood? Perhaps her answer is in the craft-based nature of her art. Feminist art historians have argued that craft art, with its strong roots in popular culture, domesticity, and reproductive labour, is the marker of a certain female approach to art 'making', emphasising maintenance and care above production, and with a critical distance towards the kind of authorship and market economies associated with (male) high art. That craft art, especially from the global south is playing an increasingly central role in museum displays and international art fairs across the globe² indicates a generalised exhaustion of the western Romantic aesthetic paradigm of art as beauty and it refocusing towards the more democratic notion of culture.

This is where Westerhof's and Bottigella's reflection on the notion of cultural heritage is articulated around two central questions. First, is cultural heritage about the past?





And hence does curating cultural heritage necessarily imply the collection of cultural manifestations of such past – as it is embodied in objects, images, or oral histories and stored in digital or physical archives, museums displays and bookshelves? And if so, what is the connection between past forms of culture and the cultural present?

Can cultural production be captured in singular historical moments or, is it not culture always unfolding and changing and mutating? In other term, doesn't historicizing cultural heritage also involve a certain degree of objectification and temporal crystallization, which both dehumanise and depoliticise it? For instance, the political relevance of the oral history attached to the Windrush Generation in the UK, contained in the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, acquired a new urgency after the Windrush scandal³, when the enduring links between Britain's past colonial history and its multicultural present became painfully evident and thanks to a series of initiatives that reactivated that black archive in response to the scandal. In other terms, the Brixton black archive is not a repository of past cultural history, but a tool for contemporary cultural struggles.

The second central issue is: who should control cultural heritage? In *Rebel Cities*, the political theorist David Harvey⁴ argues that the economies of contemporary post-industrial cities, are highly dependent on the cultural industry – broadly conceived that is, including tourism, the knowledge and media industries, and the higher education sector – as well as on real estate speculation. Moreover, for

Harvey, real estate speculation and cultural production go hand in hand, the development of art galleries, cultural centres, and university campuses, leading to a spike in local real estate markets, not to mention the impact mega-cultural events have on urban development, such as the radical reorganization of London's east end that followed the Olympic Games in the UK in 2012. Against such generalised trend of privatization and commodification of urban cultures, Harvey suggests that cultures should in fact, be treated as commons, that is, as a good produced collectively by the local community and owned and managed collectively by it. The socialization of culture has an important spatio-economic dimension too, as bottom-up cultural production works against gentrification by rooting local communities in the territory.

Dealing with the two central issues discussed above and in contrast to the widespread practice of local museums to collect and display heritage, the aim of the "Come Dine in Blue" project is to re-activate it and to recast it anew. Here Bottigella's long-lasting experience as curator, first of socially engaged art in the Pistoletto art Centre in Italy and subsequently as community-art curator in South-East London, played a central role. The relational structure of the project has been carefully developed along three axes of collaborations: with local institutions (the All Saints Church;



the Refugee Council; the All Saints Community Centre and IRMO-Indoamerican migrant and refugee organisation); with local artists (Amanda Holiday, Rain Wu, Mary McInerney, Clive Burton, and Carla Thomas) and with residents from across five Lewisham migrant & refugee communities: the Indo-Chinese; the Latin-American; first and third generation African and Afro-Caribbean heritage community and Middle Eastern refugees. The central ambition of the "Come Dine in Blue" project is to show that people are experts in their own heritage, and that art can function as a vehicle for self-narration and documentation of stories and memories that would otherwise be lost. Recasting cultural heritage as a commons, the project clearly resonates with Harvey's proposition that urban cultures must be socialised and treated as commons. Moreover, the "Come Dine in Blue" project provides a language and a methodology to let such cultural commons emerge that is, through workshops based on different craft techniques: textile workshops; poetry and visual art workshops; screen printing and embroidery workshops; paper collage and pottery workshops, storytelling and decorating, and collage workshops. The results are often impressive: the prints and embroideries of the refugee women are stylish and simple; the clay crockery from the community of La Placita, are like shells with gentle shapes and small inscriptions in them; the cut-outs and collages by the African and Afro-Caribbean community have a contemporary and dynamic feel.

Carrying with them poignant stories, evocative images or just short inscriptions, these artworks have an auratic and magic quality.

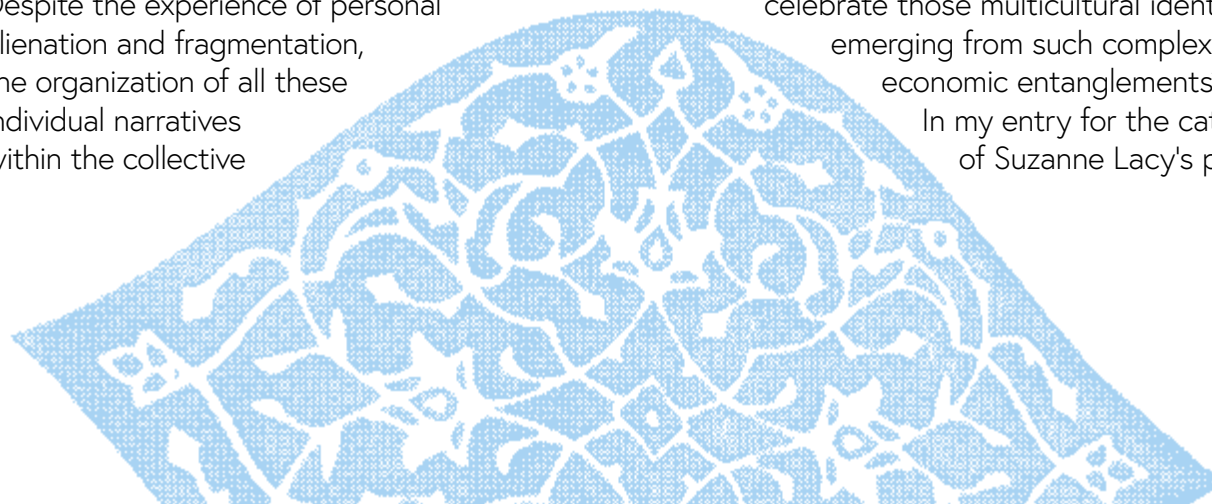
What brings together the participants' narratives is their experience of displacement, homesickness, and of longing for a lost sense of community. But the art-process triggered by Westerhof and Bottigella seems to have opened a space where these memories and feelings are made visible and tangible, in the form of potteries, textiles, poem or image, and can be collectively discussed and shared. Looking at some of the documentary material of the workshops is touching. At the clay workshop with the young Chinese community, a woman shows the beautiful clay dish she made with a faint figure of a horse surrounded by two passing clouds. She tells of her encounter with that magnificent horse in Folkestone, in one of her first days in the UK. Another woman shows the small clay labyrinth she made based on the shape of her grandfather's death certificate. Not recorded by the curators due to ethical concerns, the migrants' and refugees' experiences surely tell more dramatic and touching stories. Despite the experience of personal alienation and fragmentation, the organization of all these individual narratives within the collective

space of the project and their polyphonic curation generates a sense of solidarity and empowerment.

In an informal exchange with the curators, the vicar of All saint Church, critically addressed the superficial idea of diversity held by local politicians, as "colourful collage rather than in terms of lived experiences" and stressed instead the trauma experienced by many residents of the borough of Lewisham who migrated to London in the hope of finding a new 'motherland' and in fact, encountered hostility and harsh living conditions. The vicar strongly supported the "Come and Dine" project since the start, as it clearly addressed these sensitive issues with care and through a serious pedagogical intervention.

So how does one address multiculturalism in a borough such as Lewisham where a vast majority of displaced communities and low-income families coexist with middle class European migrants, such as me as well as the project's curators, and a growing student population who is pushing rents and the cost of life up? Can community art address these class and economic problems whilst at the same time celebrate those multicultural identities emerging from such complex socio-economic entanglements?

In my entry for the catalogue of Suzanne Lacy's project

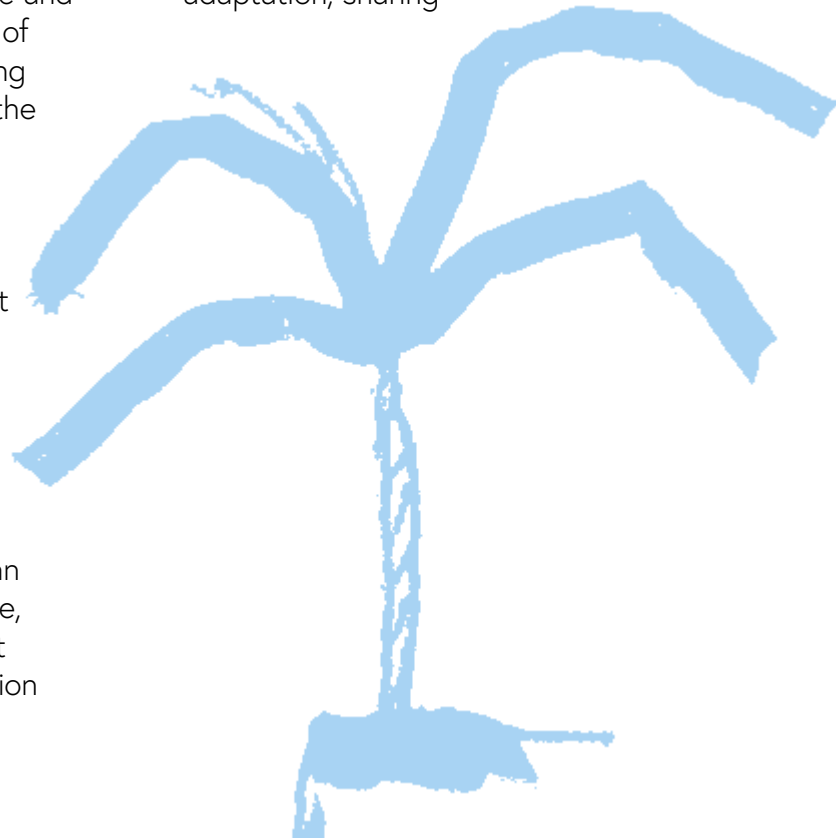




*Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope*⁵ a one-year long project aimed at bringing together the Pakistani and the British communities of Pendle, in the 19th century the world centre of the textile industry, in the context of dramatic local economic crisis and social fragmentation, I discuss three meanings of industrial heritage. First, as working-class history; second, in terms of material objects, especially buildings, but also industrial machines and tools, and third, in terms of cultural heritage, often associated in the north of the UK, with mixed ethnic, religious and musical traditions. I have argued that it is difficult to find a balance between these three meaning of heritage – as political history, as material asset, and as cultural identity. By emphasising politics and economics we may miss the subjective and cultural dimensions of the experience of belonging or not belonging. By focusing on culture and identity, we may miss the structural conditions that make each culture unique and unevenly situated. The "Come Dine in Blue" project by Tisna Westerhof and Cristiana Bottigella tackles these three different dimensions together in thoughtful and intelligent way. First, it addresses the complex socio-economic realities of Lewisham, including the experience of exclusion, precarity and marginalization experienced by refugees and migrants, by generating an empowering and cohesive social space, through a craft-based techniques that refuse the elitism and professionalization of high art. In so doing, the project

also provides a safe space, a home, for those residents whose precarious lives are often made worse by the volatility of the house market and by the local dynamics of gentrification. But more importantly the project celebrates the experience of communion and solidarity that emerges under real, as opposed to superficial, multiculturalism whereby cultural differences are both valorised and put in generative dialogue with each other. Located in the heart of New Cross, hARTslane gallery provides a much-needed counter point to those cultural heritage institutions, which continue to reproduce the idea that multiculturalism is a mosaic of already existing, compartmentalised, and static cultures, rather than a social and political process of mutual adaptation, sharing

and collective creation. As anthropologist deeply involved in both politics and art making, I am excited to witness how art can generate spaces of solidarity through making and keep cultures truly alive and open at a time of cultural wars and nationalism. Looking at the photos of the "Come Dine in Blue" project, what calls attention is the sense of home the hARTslane gallery, located in-between the heavily trafficked New Cross Road and a small retail park, brings to the area, and how the practices of cohabitation and coexistence generated by the project humanise and socialise the neighbourhood, in a way that goes beyond the remit of a simple art project. Such sense of home and belonging was perfectly captured by an inscription on a small napkin produced in one of the workshops, which says: "home is a feeling. From Comoros to France to the UK with love".



¹ Taussig, Michael. 2009. *What Colour is the Sacred?* Chicago University Press.

² See for instance the centrality of craft art in the current documenta fifteen.

³ The discovery that the documents of migrants from the Windrush generation, in 1960s, had been lost or even erased by the Home Office living them without housing, social assistance and employment rights.

⁴ Harvey, David. 2012. *Rebel Cities*. London: Verso.

⁵ Suzanne Lacy *Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope* (2016).

Hatcham Dreams

Father Grant Bolton-Debbage



My name is Father Grant Bolton-Debbage and I am the Vicar of this church, All Saints here in New Cross, Hatcham Park.

I've been here for just over two years. I love its diversity, I love the vibrancy, I love the ability to create opportunities and build communities so I'm having a wonderful time. I grew up in Norfolk in southeast England, in East Anglia, in a small village not far from where my father was born and bred. My father was a Norfolk man. My mother grew up not far from where we're standing here today. She actually lived for a little while in New Cross when her father was alive; on Queens Road, so I feel like I've got the experience of both of those worlds so far, and actually being somewhere like New Cross allows me to explore more of my black heritage I suppose and that culture which wasn't cultivated in the same way when I lived in rural Norfolk. So it's been quite an exciting journey to be taking at the moment.

Lewisham prides itself on the sheer diversity that it seems to experience but when people in the political sphere speak of such diversity, what they're talking about, it seems to me is a colourful collage of faces on poster boards and not the lived experiences that people have whilst living in this space, and it's a space that has a lot of trauma held within it. We are merely in the transition period towards triumph, and that could take a long time, we must never forget that, because if we think we're already at the triumphant, that this is what society should look like,

then what we're actually doing is trampling on people's deep experiences of the trauma that they've had.

I'm thinking about people from Sierra Leone who fled very difficult situations in order to be here, and people from my own background, the Caribbean, who came here expecting a warm welcome from the motherland and got something so incredibly different.

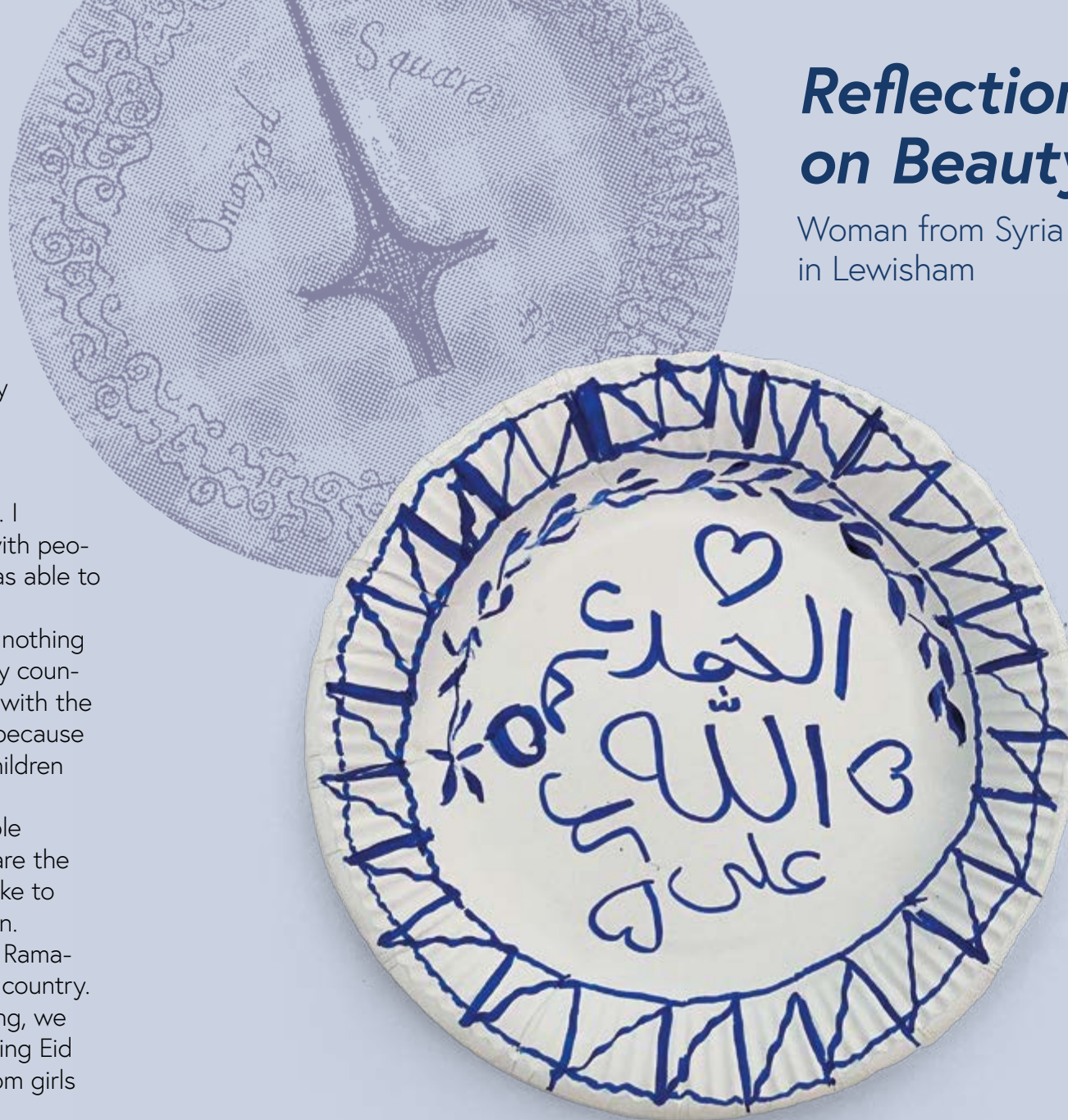
These are the people who are making up what we call a beautiful space and yet we do not treat them all as beautiful. I think we need to be a lot more intentional...and education about sharing the journeys, which is why I'm so pleased with what this project is doing; finding new creative ways, which doesn't depend on how articulate somebody is but actually just goes to our core, our base, and just allows that to flush out freely. And only then we'll see the healing that actually will make that collage of colourful faces, a genuine picture as to what Lewisham Borough is.

*I am a woman from
Syria living in Lewisham.
Blue, the colour of the sky,
and white the colour
of the clouds are my
favourite colours.*

In my country, there are white- and blue-coloured plates on the wall. The most famous food in our country is the Kibbeh, and everyone used to gather to eat together when it was prepared. Life in Lewisham was difficult at first. I couldn't speak English but I talked with people I did volunteer work with, so I was able to learn the language. All things are different now. There is nothing similar. Everything has changed in my country. I was always free to spend time with the family but it's different now, maybe because the only family I have here are my children and my husband. Family bonding, memorizing the Noble Qur'an, observing prayer and zakat are the beautiful things from my culture I'd like to keep alive and pass on to my children. The arrival of Eid on the last days of Ramadan is the biggest celebration in my country. We eat food together to break fasting, we pray together, and then start preparing Eid sweets. The whole family gathers from girls and boys, old and young. A woman in all her stages is strong and has a tender heart. I wish a world full of fun and free of wars.

Reflections on Beauty

Woman from Syria living
in Lewisham







Blue Horizons

Interview with artists Jada Perry and Fiona Quadri, part of the Be Seen, Be Heard collective.

By Frederica Agbah

Frederica Agbah

Thank you, Jada and Fiona for agreeing to take part in this interview.

Can you introduce yourselves briefly?

Jada Perry

Hiya, I'm Jada I'm 20 and currently studying Graphic Design at Ravensbourne University. I have also been a member of the Be Seen Be Heard team for just over a year now, working to co-ordinate projects that we run and supporting young black creatives in and around the Lewisham borough.

Fiona Quadri

Hey, I'm Fiona, and I would describe myself as an illustrative image-maker. I use design and illustration to explore themes of Belonging, Race and Colonialism. My work is narrated through the lens of QUEER BIPOC communities, to break stereotypical viewpoints. I just finished my BA and am now researching the aftermath of the empire and colonialism at the School of Oriental and African Studies. (SOAS)



Frederica Agbah

Can you tell me about your heritage?

Fiona Quadri

My mom is Austrian, and my dad is Nigerian. I never lived in either of the countries.

Jada Perry

I was born in the UK however I have both an African and Caribbean descent. My mum is from Ghana, however was born in the UK. As well as my dad who is Jamaican but also born in the UK.

Frederica Agbah

Where do you feel you belong to?

Jada Perry

I most definitely agree with Fiona, I feel that this question is a complicated one. For me the sense of belonging depends greatly on the people and environment I am surrounded in. I was born and raised in south-east London and have always loved being in very diverse, multicultural environments, surrounded by individuals from all different walks of life, learning about different cultures and perspectives on life. I feel that this plays a huge part in my sense of belonging. Being in an environment where everyone is accepted for their differences and uniqueness is a place where I belong. Somewhere I will be challenged and pushed to my strengths. Somewhere where I am valued for my ethics, morals and talents, rather than just to fill a quota.

Fiona Quadri

This is a bit of a complicated question and I have given it a lot of thought over the past decade. I think I found most peace with the answer of 'everywhere and nowhere'. I belong, whenever I am in a space where I feel loved surrounded by people that understand me and who I understand. People who share the same struggles as me and who have the same values. Places where I am not othered. I grew up in Brussels, in a very diverse neighbourhood. Being Austrian and Nigerian, hence having German as my mother tongue didn't matter. However, I was never perceived as someone from Belgium, hence never felt like I fully belonged. Moving to London gave me the ability to surround myself with people I feel good with. Everyone comes from everywhere which made my identity stand out less. Furthermore, most of my Nigerian family lives in East. I feel good having my family around. To conclude my thoughts, if I had to name a geographical location where I felt like I belonged most I would probably say Lewisham.

Frederica Agbah

Can you tell me more about living in London and in Lewisham in particular?

Fiona Quadri

London and in particular Lewisham is a place of people, connections and experiences. Meeting people, exchanging in order to widen horizons, learning from each other and living authentically underlines my experience. Life here overall feels like a constant exchange and self-growing process.

Jada Perry

London, (Lewisham in particular) has a great sense of community, I find that there is a lot to do within the borough, whether that is visiting the Horniman Museum, visiting the local parks, or going to try a different cuisine in the local independent restaurants and bars. Living here means that I am always able to keep my mind busy and stimulated.

Frederica Agbah

What do you find difficult or challenging about living in Lewisham?

Fiona Quadri

I think what I find difficult in Lewisham and actually London as a whole is that everything is far apart. Besides the fact that a big city can feel quite isolating, it also underlines that the city is only built for the rich. I use buses quite a lot because they are cheaper and well connected in Lewisham where we do not have the tube. However, I have to plan out a big chunk of my time travelling and waiting for constant delays. I think it's very difficult to be spontaneous when it comes to living in Lewisham. Everything has to be planned a week in advance. Furthermore, rent prices rising is another factor that hits us quite hard.

New buildings and student accommodations are being built in Lewisham and overall living expenses increase everywhere. Keeping myself sane without overworking myself, sleeping enough and having leisure activities becomes difficult.

Jada Perry

Personally, I found that the support for young people with an interest in the creative industries is something that has only recently started to develop. When I attended school, I feel that there was a much heavier focus on STEM subjects than creative subjects. Although this is gradually changing, I feel there is still lots more room for change. Encouraging the young community to explore their options in the creative industries is extremely important.



Frederica Agbah

What do you find inspiring about Lewisham?

Fiona Quadri

The people, the community. Whether you were born and raised in Lewisham or only came a couple of years ago, you feel welcomed and included. Every single person I met in Lewisham has a story to tell and a fact that links them to the borough. Compared to other boroughs in London, Lewisham focused on connectivity, togetherness and stories. I think this is the essence that inspires me about Lewisham.

Jada Perry

I am inspired by the way Lewisham acknowledges its diverse demographics and celebrates this through various cultural events and festivals. This is an amazing way to increase inclusion. This year especially the Lewisham borough has played a huge part in bringing everyone together with the London Borough of Culture Festival 2022.

Frederica Agbah

How does living in Lewisham influence your art practice?

Jada Perry

Living in Lewisham has encouraged me to investigate the way in which cultural diffusion has become prevalent. Through the migration of people (often between countries), there is a natural influx of traditions and ways of life that are brought with them, resulting in the fusion of social norms. With London being such a diverse and multi-cultural city, I feel that a wide range of social norms such as: Music, Fashion Trends, Food, etc. are greatly influenced by a long history of cultural diffusion. Visiting the Migration Museum located in the Lewisham Shopping Centre really allowed me to see different aspects, similarities and differences of migration from countries all over the world.

Fiona Quadri

My art practice, which focuses on the narration of diasporic experiences, is heavily influenced by where I live. The many different people and the different smells, foods and sounds, the fact that a large Black community is present and feels at home here.

Frederica Agbah

Who would you like to reach with your work?

Fiona Quadri

The Black Community first and foremost, as my work entails creating something with the community for the community. However, I also want to reach a larger audience, people that are oblivious and hold prejudices towards the global majority. With my art I would like to address topics of identity, race and the remnants of the empire to stir new dialogues.

Jada Perry

I would like for my work to reach the young black community, as I feel that seeing peers with the same social backgrounds in an industry can really encourage others and create a real feeling of motivation.

Frederica Agbah

Could you describe the make-up of your family?

Fiona Quadri

My mom is white, and my dad is Black. I am the only mixed-Black person in my family.

Jada Perry

I live with my mum, my dad and my older brother, we are all very close. I am also really close with both of my grandmas they honestly mean the world to me. I come from a huge family. My mum's side is from Ghana and my dad's side is from Jamaica.

Frederica Agbah

Tell me about your favourite family celebrations.

Fiona Quadri

I love celebrating Nigerian Weddings. The food, the dances, the people, the laughter, the Black Joy experienced within a space. I also love Christmas with my Austrian Family, going on a long walk in the snowy forest next to my grandma's house with the cousins and uncles and aunties before going to Church. Sharing food together on Christmas Day is also a special occasion, as I feel very loved and accepted in my Family space.

Jada Perry

I specifically enjoy Christmas time with my family, the whole build-up is stressful, present shopping, food shopping, organising secret Santa etc. Although it's absolute chaos in the house and there is barely any space to move, I wouldn't have it any other way. Everyone comes round (and brings a dish), and we all sit together and eat as much food as we can. The amount of food I consume over the Christmas period is a joke. We play games and spend amazing quality time together.



Frederica Agbah

What are the rituals or elements of your cultural heritage that you'd like to hold on to and celebrate?

Fiona Quadri

The Yoruba language and the Austrian dialect. I hope that it will be passed down in the coming generations.

Jada Perry

A very important cultural ritual in my household is that every Sunday we all sit down together and eat a traditional Caribbean dish of rice and peas, we either have it with chicken, curry, fish etc. we will sit together with no phones, no distractions and just talk with each other update each other about what's going on in our lives.

Frederica Agbah

Is heritage important in your art practice?

Jada Perry

Heritage is extremely important to me in my art practice I am interested in, learning about my background and history within the black African and Caribbean community.

Fiona Quadri

I think my heritage plays a role within my work, automatically influencing my work politically. Whatever I do, race, belonging and my position in society shape my experience and my artistic development. A lot of my work does directly link to Black history, but even if I just paint without thinking too much, I tend to depict Black bodies and faces. I am keen to represent my people, my community and develop my research and interactions through mixed media.



Frederica Agbah

What does the colour blue mean to you?

Fiona Quadri

Blue to me represents a cloudless sky, which reminds me of infinite possibilities and freedom.

Jada Perry

For me, the colour blue is a very versatile and calming colour. When I see it, I instantly feel relaxed and at peace.

Frederica Agbah

What do you think a 'Lewisham Blue Borough' could signify?

Fiona Quadri

Lewisham Blue Borough could signify a borough of endless joy and love and freedom. Togetherness, thriving without being held up.

Jada Perry

As I mentioned I feel that the colour blue is very versatile, therefore I feel that 'A Lewisham Blue Borough' represents a welcoming borough with its doors always open, that encourages individuals to be themselves and embrace their personal cultures and traditions.

Frederica Agbah

What are your wishes for a better world for young black people?

Fiona Quadri

My wishes for young Black people; that with each new generation we will need to work less hard to achieve the same results as our white counterparts, that Whiteness is no longer regarded as the default viewpoint and that Black and Brown bodies will no longer be objectified, commodified and regarded as less worthy. That Black bodies will not be classed and stereotyped, that young Black boys specifically will not be scared to walk and be killed by government officials. That young Black girls will understand their rights all around the world and rise out of their gender roles, and that black trans people who are lowest in the hierarchies of the world will have the right to exist and live with no harm and equally endless opportunities. I am wishing for the Black community to stick together and rise as a whole; I am hoping issues of colourism will also be resolved and that lighter skinned people will regard and uplift darker skinned people of the community. I am hoping for us all to succeed and rise.

Jada Perry

My wishes for a better world for young black people are that we are all encouraged and pushed to achieve our own personal goals with strong support systems around us. I also feel that it is important for the young black community to continue to see more and more influential role models to look up to and be inspired by. As I mentioned earlier, I wish for all young black people to be valued for their ethics, morals and talents rather than just to fill a diversity quota, I feel this is still a huge issue today in society that needs to be addressed.

Love and Adventure

Shoko Sakuma



Title: **DANCE!**

I am often fascinated by the place where everyone can be who they are, where each of us can express our feelings no matter the age, gender, ethnicity, or social groups, even animals. There should be more places where we can express ourselves from our heart, and whole parts of our bodies. Such infrastructures can expand the potential of our bodies, our perceptions and our understandings.



Title: **HART'S LANE**

The paved area at the end of Hart's Lane, at the junction with New Cross Road, often becomes a spot for fly-tipping. Being covered with trash and motorbikes, the area does not provide enough space for those with pushchairs, wheelchair users and even cyclists - though Hart's Lane is on a signposted cycle route. It is a pity. This place has the potential to be used for the common good, such as a community garden with an existing cherry blossom tree. I hope there is more care for each other, and we can protect this community better.



Title: **LOVE & ADVENTURE**

When I was small, I used to like swimming with my mother. Actually, I was just holding on to her back while she was swimming. I felt safe but also enjoyed a small adventure in the water. I felt like we were dolphins. Now I have one son and can swim with him. I hope I can share the same feelings of safety and adventure with him as my mother did. I also hope we can do better to protect nature, for all the creatures.



Title: **RHYTHMS AND PATTERNS**

Each life has its own way, patterns and rhythms. We encounter and leave, perhaps meet again, or merge, with ups and downs. Then we keep on moving. Hope we acknowledge the horizon of the world we are in, and understand the uniqueness of each other.

Tracing Blue Blood Lines

Written by Amanda Holiday,
artist, poet and film-maker

BLUE BLOOD LINE 1

A 'blue blood line' usually refers to one that is aristocratic - most likely an imperial and a colonial one. My Grandfather in Sendumei, Sierra Leone was a Paramount Chief – which, my English mother used to tell me and my sister - when we were young - was equivalent to British Royalty.



Amanda Holiday, her mother Jane
and sister Yewa c 1968

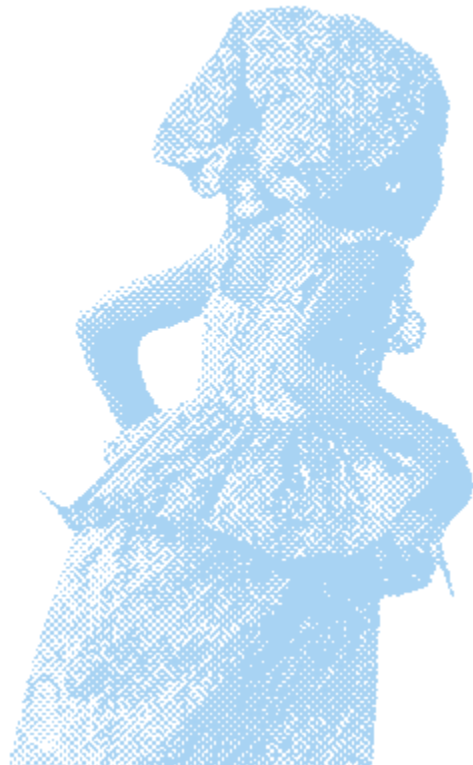
So, we were Royal, or at least descendants of Royalty though, having travelled by ship from Freetown, to live in a council house in drab, grey Nelson in the North of England, it never felt like it and no one ever believed it – so we stopped mentioning it.

Tracing the link between the term 'Paramount Chief' and blue blood lineage confirms that the status of African (and Asian) 'royalty' was purposely downgraded;

*'During the Victorian era, paramount chief was a formal title created by British colonial administrators in the British Empire and applied to Britain's colonies in Asia and Africa. They used it as a substitute for the word "king" to ensure that only the British monarch held that title. Since the title "chief" was already used in terms of district and town administrators, the addition of "paramount" was made so as to distinguish between the ruling monarch and the local aristocracy.'*¹

BLUE BLOOD LINE 2

In the run up to Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's wedding (and long before they had decided to extract themselves from the Royal family) there was a story about Princess Michael of Kent and a gold blackamoor brooch that she'd worn, it was rumoured, in order to mock and antagonise the new 'mulatto interloper'. This is not the same brooch (pictured) but it helped me to imagine what such a brooch might say if it spoke out at the nuptials. By the time I wrote the poem 'Blackamoor', the character of the brooch had morphed into an irrepressible, anarchic trickster who spoke in patois and had to be locked away due to the truths he threatened to expose about the blue bloods.



Blackamoor pin brooch
(<https://www.primaveragallery.com/product/nineteenth-century-blackamoor-brooch/>)

Ya check mi look horty intit? Not even the Kent Mykull Princess Knowwhatiknow See me I'm man but thi ras jewellery designer dem put lipstick onmi! Yam still lipperty feistywordspout, spititout troot and forbearance, and loveit there clipped upon some lapel or her chokeupon ribbon wi di pearl earring curl behind the gold tresses o di diayaman choker o di tea ara and jus lookatmi lookathis feathery headriff wit emaral anna purpul stone inlay and abasinth and cobalt glass, an ma hard face look nuh? peepit all the witey royalty dem picking about on high heel poshering.

click clark hoity airy larking about and yarn. And now Meghan come dis little mixed black and white picni marryin Harry an dem now all freaking locked me up inna jewellery box wid a key straight away told me I was persona brooch non grata, now down to her, my blackamoor face mocks her they say! Jeez and peas whonoknowgoknow ayes a piece of history jus like we all are. Nosay? ²

BLUE BLOOD LINE 3

As part of the workshop sessions for 'Come Dine in Blue', the group of Lewisham based young black artists from the Be Seen, Be Heard collective listened to 'Six Space Shuttles and 144,000 Elephants' a ballad of Lonnie Holley - a shaman-like US black artist and musician. To aid our listening and the acoustics, the i-phone was placed inside a vase – this created a sense of disembodiment – as though the vase itself was singing. Holley's is a nasal, enveloping, lassoing voice that fills the room like incense. In this ballad, Holley sings about the Queen leaving earth on a spaceship. 'Yes, indeed our Queen Elizabeth II', I confirmed, in case anyone thought otherwise — the Queen coming together with other 'Queens' whoever they might be;

Woman once asked me,
Why do I sing for a queen?
I said all the Queen have done,
all of her are lay behind

The pathos of Holley's bluesy lines conceals a surreal and idealistic narrative. The song is a call to a mixed and migratory future, to forgiveness, to the planet, to Queens be they royal, commoner or un-throned, to come together and heal.

By time all six get off in the universe
From the expiration of the planet Earth
When Queens get together, be fly'n around
Above the ground, and when they come
back down

when they come back down,
when they come back down,
when they come back down.
they can walk around, they can talk around
They can lead around,
they can heal the ground
They can heal the air
And fix the water too ³

For the group of young artists, the hallowed soundscape made space for untold imaginary possibility — for healing, for communicating, for freeing and for being free.

BLUE BLOOD LINE 4

In the 1990s, I lived in Brockley and went out one morning to find the whole street crammed with cars parked up erratically on the pavements. I asked in the newsagent what was going on – and was told they were journalists; the previous day a young local mixed-race woman had abandoned her baby outside Buckingham Palace.

the baby cried very little -
he had been home two days
milk in her breast, one feed
the house was hollow

she wrapped him in brown paper
inside a fleece. 5 am at the bus stop
waiting. London was still.

In Pall Mall taxis churred on tarmac
streetlamps blinked

at Buckingham Palace gate
she laid him down and walked away.

He would stride back, one day
with brass bands blasting,
jet planes icing the sky
in red and blue plumes
a million plastic flags
fanning the new king -
her baby, grown so tall 4

BLUE BLOOD LINE 5

I don't remember the address of the first house where our family lived in Sierra Leone and my mother, now 84, is too diminished by age and Alzheimer's to tell me. But there are rumours and there are memories. My mother once said that Queen Elizabeth II, visited Sierra Leone in 1961 and stayed in our family house in Kenema - before I was born.

My half brother's family are Kaikais so this young girl (in the photo who has been identified as Mamwai Kaikai) could be a relative. Most of my brother's uncles were later incarcerated in Pademba Road Prison in Freetown or hung – but that came later, much later.

I do remember a beautiful house in Kenema with a huge garden that went on for ever with pitanga cherry trees and bushes whose bark tasted like cinnamon. There were lizards with turquoise eyes and geckos and ants that me and my sister would crouch over and watch for hours as they marched in battalions across the stoep. There was our dog Sancho Panza and monkey Abelard and skittish goats that ran everywhere.

My father who frowned always, brought animals home regularly from the forests; birds, monkeys, tortoises that soon got lost - and an owl that stayed up in the tree, motionless for a week before it fell dead from the branch like a plum. There were separate toilets, one for men and one for women. There was Ramadan and there was Christmas, and everyone celebrated both. There was roast goat. There were the Sierra Leone Peoples Party friends of my father who came and drank and talked all night and ate



Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip attend the Kenema Royal Show, Sierra Leone, 1961.
Artist: Unknown / Alamy Stock Photo

my mother's biscuits. There were the husbands' expectations of their wives and the wives' simmering resentments. There was the uncle whose house was packed to the ceiling with empty green bottles. There were my mother's white girl friends all married to Sierra Leoneans who met to plot their own rebellions. There were deep fissures and frictions. And one day we left. My mother didn't tell my father it was going to be for ever. In April 1969, we walked up the gangplank on to the Elder Dempster Steam packet company ship docked at Freetown and sailed all the way to Liverpool Docks, and I didn't see my father again for twenty years.

¹ Wikipedia entry 'Paramount Chief'

² Blackamoor, Amanda Holiday published in *Prairie Schooner*, Dec 2020

³ Lonnie Holley – lyrics from 'Six Space Shuttles and 144,000 Elephants'

⁴ The Mother who left her Baby for the Queen, Amanda Holiday, published in UEA Anthology, Egg Box publishing



Women hold up half the sky

Interview with artist Alice Qianhui Sun

By Frederica Agbah

FA » So, Alice, first could I ask you to briefly introduce yourself?

QS » Hi, my name is Alice. My Chinese name is Qianhui, I'm 22 years old right now and I just freshly graduated from BA Fine Art at Goldsmiths.

FA » Thank you, Alice. Please could you state your gender, your employment status and your occupation and what occupation you had before migrating to the UK.

QS » So, I'm female, artist and sometimes work as an invigilator in Workplace Gallery and also I work as a tour guide in Tate Modern, but I was employed by a Chinese company called EU mainly focused on the Mandarin speaking Sinophone people, audiences. Sinophone is like the people who speak many years Chinese, but include Cantonese, Chinese, but also... people who live in Singapore.

So, it's like a border group instead of using a specific state. And also, because I'm more like an international student, so it's not really like emigrate to this country.

FA » Could you tell me about your ethnic background please?

QS » So, I was born in China. 100% Chinese and my parents were born in China.

FA » And can you tell me about your family dynamics?

QS » So, my family are Chinese as well and we are from the northern part of China, and I was born in City Court, Shandong province, and it's not really far from Beijing but in China, we have the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western (regions), so more like North Eastern.

FA » Tell me what your family comprises of, Mum, Dad?

QS » So I'm the only child in the family and my family is like father, mother, and I have two dogs, but also... grandparents.

FA » Going back to being born in China, how would you describe your cultural identity?

QS » Wow, that's a really good question. I would say quite like Chinese like a really Chinese and I, because the province I was born, called Shandong Province, which is also the hometown of Confucius, so we have lots of how to do you say, like the Confucius philosophy always has, like huge impact on us. So we really pay attention to the social order, being polite. Being polite to people, respect people, and also we think the family or a community is always very important.

FA » So would you say that was the main three aspects of Confucius philosophy, or could you tell me a little bit more about that? Because that seems quite important.

QS » Yeah. So I think because during the like, back, like ancient times the Confucius always played that important role in Chinese history. And this idea, I mean, even nowadays, I know like, in Chinese culture, we always tend to think about community or collectivism is more important than the individualism. I think that's also been part of

Confucius philosophy. But nowadays, I think the younger generation even though we are like taking the Western influence but still, when you are young, you need to study like the important canon, the book. I think that's kind of more like, influence, like because you know, when we make decisions or when we treat people, meet people we'll kind of think about him.

Also, like Goldsmiths has a quite strong connection with Confucius institutions, and now like the Confucius Institute (within Goldsmiths University), is more like a platform to spread the Chinese culture.

FA » Did you live in any other areas of the UK or London before you moved to Lewisham?

QS » Erm, I will say I spend my four years here, but the first time I've been to UK is more like for travelling so we're living in the city centre. And I could feel like, lots of like, differences between different area of London, but I really love the time I spent in New Cross in the Lewisham and at the beginning, I just want to live in close with my campus so I could come to school more often and spend more time in the studio, but then I realised this area is so multicultural.

I can still remember the first day I've been here, I was a little bit overwhelmed because before, I mainly stayed in China and all my friends they are like most like they're all Chinese. But I was a little bit nervous. And I was a little bit shy to kind of like leave my comfort zone and talk to people. But I think after month

I gradually know the people, know my neighbours and also like the, you know, the little shops, the restaurant owner.

FA » Can you tell me a little bit about some of the cultural and religious traditions in the province where you were born?

QS » I think my family believed the, er, Buddhism, but we kind of believe (in) Buddhism, or the Karma, and we believe if you do something good now, that we'll kind of, will have the good afterlife. Chinese New Year, or the mid-Autumn festival, we eat Moon Cake, or we eat erm like, it's called Lam Shiao, it's kind of round, little, like dumplings. It's sticky rice outside but inside, we've got different flavour. It could be sesame flavour.

FA » And what about the religious side, do you have any specific religious festivals that you observe in your family?

QS » I think it's I wouldn't say it's like really superstitious, but it's a little bit superstitious. (Slightly misunderstands the question). For example, if we move to a new house, and we will burning some paper, money, the Joss paper or maybe paper money and to for the for the God, not really God but for the spirits; there is for the kind of God to protect the house. And also, I think the funeral ceremony in China always been very like, special compared with the Western funeral ceremonies because we always believe people they go after life. And we light during the funeral.

In the funeral we're burning the paper money and we hope the people who passed away they could have a good life in the other world and also we prepare some food. For example, the chicken, the fish, usually there will be like the whole fish and the whole chicken, some fruits, some snacks, and we bring them into the grave. And we do those like...like a ceremony, but this kind of behaviour usually happened. Maybe every year in a specific culture festival we call Qing Ming festival is like around May. And so for that day it's like for people to look back their ancestor because...

FA » So is that something that happens every year with most families, that they have that day of remembrance?

QS » Yeah. But maybe you don't have to be there for that day like, it should be like, a day to kind of remember because I've felt like in the Chinese society, we have a very close relationship between different generation like when they're alive we think we need to respect the elders and we need to, you know, because they take care of us when we're young. So we need to give those kinda how to say, their responsibility to take care of them. And even though they passed away, we believe the connection still there and we want they have a good life. And also, we believe they could attack us.

I think the modern day I think, probably because in that day, usually we should go to the grave you know to clean the grave and to bring the food, burning some paper money. But for the people like the young people, they don't have to go there because usually it's the parents





or the elderly people in the family to do this then. But still, you kind of remember them in your mind. But you don't have to do something like really specific.

FA » And can you tell me the significance of the food offering?

QS » I think the food is quite similar because we want them to have meat to have the fruit. But usually those food is not the food that you could eat in the restaurant. They are not much flavour. It's more like boiled chicken, the whole chicken the fish is like subtly fried and also some Chinese bakery, the biscuits, some sweets. Maybe they will light some cigarettes if the people who pass away like to smoke.

FA » So it's kind of signifying the things that they enjoyed?

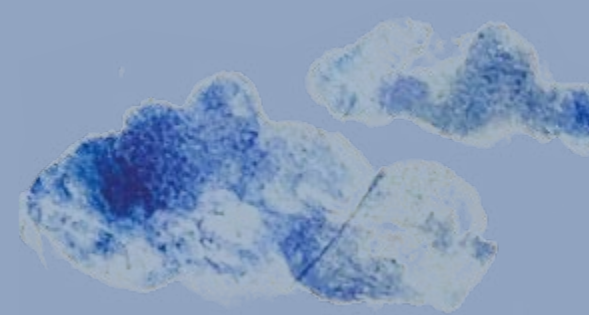
QS » Yes. And you kind of arrange them like in front of the grave. And the family will say something, maybe say it loud, about you know, to tell the people like don't worry about for example, the children have a good life they have a good grade. Also with... I don't know like other family does that or not, but I know my family did it with like, 'Oh, if you want something you could let us know'. You know in a dream or something. It sounds really superstitious, I realise that (laughs).

FA » We talked a little bit earlier about the cultural traditions of your province. Is there anything else you wanted to add to that?

QS » I felt like the Chinese calligraphy always plays an important role in the Chinese art. I think even in the really past like a Tang Dynasty, the calligraphy even more important than the Chinese Shanshui painting. They're all, they all use the brush and the ink. But we feel, if you look at someone's character, the calligraphy, the work, you can know the personality from the, from the character. And because when you use the brushes it's kind of you need to use your body your elbow to control it. Also calligraphy is kind of, like a way of meditation, and when you write it, you're just so focused on the body and the brush and you forget other things so we think it's a good way to make you calm.

FA » So Alice, you were an active participant in the recent Come Dine in Blue workshops. Could you tell me about how you heard about the workshops and what attracted you into taking part?

QS » Yeah, so because the hARTslane gallery always have a really good connection with the local artists. And also with the local community schools. And firstly, I went to my friend, performance night and then I started to know the gallery. And then I was I saw the open call of the 10th anniversary exhibition. So I was in that exhibition and then they told me there is opportunity to make ceramic with other people and outside because usually I make ceramic by myself. And then I think



it's a good chance to, you know, share stories. And get to know people, know the community. So I decided to join.

FA » Can you talk me through the artwork that you actually made at the Come Dine in Blue workshop?

QS » Yes. So the three pieces I made in the workshop, the first one is a small cup, the tea cups, because in the workshop the tutor said erm, gave us a small pieces of clay and asked us to practice and to make different shapes. Kind of like a warm up. So I made a very small tea cups, because I love drinking tea. There are lots of like, unspoken but kind of like common sense. For example, if you pour the tea for other people, you can't pour it like 100% full; you need to pour like 70% to show the respect. If you give the full tea it means you want your guest to leave, leave the house, to kind of tell them, leave! (Laughs).

FA » So it's rude to fill up the person's teacup?

QS » Yes. And so in that small tea cup I made, I made a lots of like pattern, but also can kind of give you a little bit flavour of how much tea you should put in.

FA » I see, so like an indication.

QS » Yes, yes, but there are many lines, like, like a pattern. So for the second piece,

I made a plate with a pony in it. That pony is referenced by a photograph, it was taking in UK I forgot, (pauses), Folkestone! And so that was like a day trip with my performance group and I saw this little cute horse and I really love horse, this animal because I think I love the spirit and the symbolism behind it. It's always kind of showing the you know the freedom, the brave and also like there are some Chinese traditional artists, they draw horses in the traditional like Chinese painting. And we always like to use horse to represent a person. And so I think that kind of like resonates with me.

And the third piece is a bowl and it's more like a rice bowl, you could put rice in it. I think that's kind of related to our every day. It's quite small, but I think you can also drink the soup with it

FA » On that note, can you tell me a bit more about food in China, any particular food in your province that's popular?

QS » Actually in my province because we don't eat many rice, but we still eat some, like my family love to eat rice sometimes. But we have a special pancake it's kind of like crepe the way making that pancake you know you put on a very hot round stove and you pour the kind of mixture in it and then you use a special tool to make a round. But it's not sweet and we put some we could put some veggies and meat in the pancake as we roll it and eat it. Also we have Manto it's like bread, it's made of flour yeah so it usually be quite white, round. And then you need to let the dough prove a bit, you put the yeast in and it's quite soft. So it's between the cake and half bread.

FA » And you talked about, you know, the soup bowl, the rice bowl. Are there any particular soup dishes or rice dishes, that you know that you like or that is part of your culture?

QS » Oh, there is this very special soup called Sá and I think it's only in the city I was born or maybe like a small area in China like in Shandong Province. It's not very common but that soup, Sá, is kind of like a meat soup, and they put the, the bones the like cow bones in it and they make it cook for a long time and they put lots of pepper, so many spices. So when you look at it, it's kind of like dark grey, brownish. It doesn't look delicious, but then they put some like very thinly sliced beef in it. So if you drink it you will have lots of like, you sweat.

FA » So going back to the workshops at hARTslane, what do you think you got out of them?

QS » I felt, how we work together plays a quite important role to me because I felt this kind of collective creativity is quite special. Because, you know, in the old time when people sitting together when they are busy with their hands, you know, like if they're making something, they really love to talk and share their stories. So I really loved the conversation we had during the workshop with other people. Some people they talk about they're from the southern part of China, they talk about the Hotpot, (a kind of mixed ingredient light stew) tradition, the, the eating habits we share about, you know, different kinds of lifestyles and also we had the participants from like other countries but they love to share. You know, we kind of compare the common thing in the culture

and also the different things.

And the three little pieces I made, I felt that every time when I look at them, I can kind of remember that good time the sharing time. It's kind of like a safe space for me. But also when I'm making ceramics I don't really specific use the blue and white, this kind of special glaze. But this workshop kind of gave me the opportunity and allow me know more about my culture and to know this very special ceramic. Also, I felt like cuz nowadays I don't have much time to cook, the food I eat, my flatmate calls miserable food! They are really quick to eat and they're not really Chinese, but they're not really Western as well. They're kind of like a mixture. For example, I put peanut butter with vinegar with ketchup and eat like to make special sauce with Udon.

FA » With Udon noodles?

QS » Yeah! So I felt with the ceramic piece I made I could make my foods less miserable, I hope? (Both laugh).

FA » What does blue and white mean to you? And particularly as someone of Chinese heritage, what influences if any, does the blue and white ceramic tradition of the Far East have on you and your work?

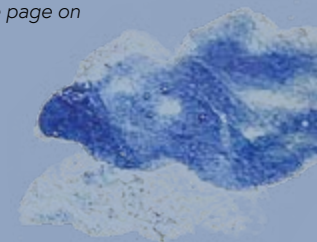
QS » I felt like in my generation, we all kind of know the blue and white ceramic because there was a really popular song called Blue and White Ceramics by a Taiwanese singer. (Blue and White Porcelain by Jay Chou).

FA » Do you feel that the hARTsLane workshops and particularly the blue and white theme will have any impact on your art practice going forward in the future?

QS » Yes. I think the way they organising people and reach out to the community it's quite inspiring. And they...I think they arrange it very sensitively and carefully and they don't just want to talk in the culture but it's more like getting in the community. Because I want to move my fine art practice to museums and galleries in education... I think the way this workshop operation it kind of inspires me when I want to reach out to the community in the future, but also, it made me have more knowledge about my own culture. Because sometimes I felt as a Chinese, I think I know about the blue and white ceramics, but, I didn't focus on that specific period.

But now if I go to the different museums, and I saw that China section, I could suddenly like quickly recognise and remember like what we talked about in the workshop.

This is an abridged version of an in-depth verbatim oral history interview. For the full interview please visit the Come Dine in Blue page on the hARTslane website.



Recuerdos de mamá

Fabiola Jimenez



Plate 1

This photo is very special to me. It's a good memory from 7 years ago. This is my mother and my son on the day of his inauguration into the police in Ecuador. I lost my mother during the pandemic to Covid-19. She was in Ecuador and I was here in England. When I left Ecuador I left my son with my mother to raise so he was like a mother to him also.

I take this photo with me everywhere, it means a lot to me. Now this image will be with me forever.

Plate 2

This one represents my family on the day of my daughter's communion at a church in Vauxhall. We are Catholic and this is a very important day for us.

There are a lot of things from Ecuador that you can find here in London but it's not quite the same - there, things are more natural, there are less chemicals in the food and food is less processed. Language has been a big challenge for me here but I'm trying.

What I really appreciate about London is how safe I feel. I can go around and not worry about the jewellery I'm wearing or what's in my purse. In Ecuador you have to be very careful just walking in the streets.

Volleyball in the parks has become a really important space for us as a community.

We can share time and food together as the volleyball games play on and it's a fun way to pass the time together. I get to catch up with friends and it's a family event. Between London and Ecuador that's what connects me to both, it's family. It's the most important thing.



From cobalt ores to Mongolian legends: the journey of your china dinner plate

Rachel Kanev and Chenjin Ying

As we visit restaurants and cafes and look down eagerly at our food laden platters, invariably encompassed by a certain ravenousness, we rarely take the time to contemplate how the platter itself came to be. Yet, as mealtimes shape our lives, the evolution of the blue-and-white plates before us is more significant and relevant to our shared collective history and the modern experience than we may imagine. Just as we could not come to be without our ancestors before us, ceramics and pottery could not be what they are today without the potters of old. Be it our language, our arts, our customs, our communities, even our thought processes, are derived and defined by those who go before us. Projects that explore our historical routes help us to hear from the voices in our local and wider community and reconcile where we come from with our place in the community today.



Lead Glazed Figure of a Horse, (728 AD), 85cm, Image of Sancai horse with glaze firing imperfections on the body that have led to colour running
[Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum]

Emblematic Chinese blue-and-white porcelain has penetrated cultures throughout the world, leaving indelible imprints on communities all the way from China to Lewisham. In existence for more than one thousand years, the aesthetic charm and uniqueness of blue-and-white porcelain endures as an extraordinary emblem of Chinese visual arts, yet the journey of how it came to be a staple in our homes still eludes many of us.

Our first foray into blue-and-white porcelain leads us naturally to its namesake – China. Whilst in the West, Jesus and Mary are often depicted in blue in biblical artwork¹ and blue is

historically and poetically associated with the sky and therefore the heavens, purity and truth, in China, it was the emperor who was 'the Son of Heaven' and thus, it was yellow – the colour associated with Tang dynasty emperors – that had sacred and royal connotations. The colour blue was not even represented by its own character 《藍》 (Lán) as it is today, but rather the character 《青》 (Qīng), which expressed green, but also blue and even black. Take a glimpse of any authentic Chinese New Year celebrations and you will most certainly have a sighting of items adorned in festive shades of scarlet or crimson – surely the auspicious red or the royal yellow would have been more suitable candidates to popularize the nation's platters?

We must glance back at China's early ceramic history to better understand this curious choice of colour palette. Chinese potters have been perfecting their craft for more than 10,000 years, as far back as the stone age. Yet it was during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) that ceramic production was able to see astounding advancements and that the colour blue would begin to win favour with ceramists across China. The Tang era was a time of cultural prosperity thanks in part to Tang emperors who ordered construction of temples, supported trade of wares like ceramics and silk and helped to establish the Silk Road, which ignited intercultural exchanges and learning between China and neighbouring kingdoms.²

Indeed, the earliest known porcelain can be traced back to the Tang dynasty porcelain of the Gongxian Kilns located in Gongyi, Henan



Dutch Tulip Vase



Italian Maiolica



British Willow Pattern platter



Jamaican pitcher



Portuguese Azulejos



Middle Eastern ceramics



Chinese ginger jar



Japanese plate



Persian pilgrim flask



South African blue baluster vase



Nigerian beaded ornament



Brazilian porcelain plate



Talavera pottery

The Spread of the Blue and White

Tai Chi is for
medication



The Tai Chi Fan is our weapon
of wellness
and joy



province in central China's Yellow River Valley. An area rich in natural resources, Chinese potters were able to produce porcelain using a white clay *kaolin* 《高岭土》(Gāolǐngtǔ) mixed with a stone, *baidunzi* 《白墩子》(Bái dūnzi).^{3 4} Situated just outside the ancient capital of Luoyang (home of the Longmen Grottoes), and just 9km south of the Gongyi Grottoes, this was an area of explosive spiritual, cultural and artistic creativity.

Thus, not only was the Yellow River the 'birthplace of the Chinese civilization', many millennia later it would also become the birthplace of one of China's most far-reaching, culturally symbolic and representative artistic creations – Chinese porcelain.

Sancai earthenware 《唐三彩》(Tángsāncǎi), meaning tri-coloured Tang, was a ceramic technique that would become a stepping-stone paving the way for the invention of Chinese porcelain. Sancai ceramic processes were similar to those later used in porcelain production; ceramists started to experiment with a double rather than single firing process and would fire earthenware at a much higher temperature than for Sancai and so, Chinese porcelain was born.⁵ The ceramic body of porcelain was a green shade the first time it was placed in the kiln, before being painted, overglazed and returned to the kiln. Oxidation in the kiln would give the original green body its white colouring. Thus, you could say that the blue-and-white porcelain of old was not only blue-and-white, but in essence, blue, white and green.⁶

Sancai colours were achieved by materials like copper, however, these materials were volatile. Copper tended to run and could change colour after glazing, turning unexpected shades of red, brown or green in the kiln.

Thus, what enabled blue-and-white pottery to rise in stature among Chinese ceramicists was in fact not merely the colour itself, but the flexibility of painting designs and ceramic techniques that were enabled by the colour. The natural mineral cobalt is one of the few materials that could be under-glazed. Cobalt was less prone to the unexpected post-firing transformations of existing materials like copper and intricate hand painted designs remained largely unperturbed by the high-firing temperatures required for porcelain production – an attractive trait indeed to ceramic painters across the country.

The blue pigmentation of blue-and-white porcelain was achieved by transforming cobalt into a fine powder and exposing it to heat. When iron-rich cobalt was exposed to high temperatures, a bright blue shade appeared and when iron-deficient cobalt was used, a paler blue-grey or even slightly black shade appeared.⁷

And so, the journey of our plates pulls us further down the Silk Road towards the ancient Iranian empire of Persia, where iron-rich cobalt ores were located. Sources suggest that the Tang dynasty ceramicists first began their cobalt-based motifs using cobalt imported from the Middle East having been influenced by

artisanal Islamic cobalt blue earthenware there. Indeed, cobalt blue glazed stoneware had been used in the Middle East as far back as the 6th century BC, with evidence of glazed cobalt identified on the walls of the Ishtar Gate to the ancient city of Babylon (modern-day Iraq)⁸. Egyptian artists had also used cobalt mixed with local gemstones and minerals to create the Egyptian-blue turquoise colour seen on Egyptian temple facades, glassware and ceramics.

As such, the cobalt blue of early blue-and-white ceramics was probably first seen in Persian ceramics, or even further back in time to the stoneware of the ancient Egyptian and even Babylonian civilizations. It has also been suggested that cobalt had been historically known to China (such as during the Warring States era 475 – 221 BC)⁹. Whatever the case, Chinese artisans were doubtless the first to use it on porcelain. Blue-and-white Chinese porcelain emitted an aesthetically alluring translucent effect that would both fascinate and inspire artisans along the Silk Road for centuries to come¹⁰.

Yet just as political stability and international cultural exchanges acted as a propeller in ceramic advancement during the Tang dynasty, the violence and unrest of a divided China – with the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms era (907-960 AD) – that followed, affected China's ceramic industry. Even with a reunified China during the culturally prosperous Song dynasty (960-1279), when landscape painting, calligraphy and poetry blossomed, blue-

and-white porcelain production remained comparatively low. The ebbs and flows of blue-and-white porcelain production have followed the artistic tastes of the rulers in place and Song dynasty emperors preferred single-tone ceramics to the two-tone blue-and-white porcelain^{11 12}.

However, in 1279 as the Mongolian army edged closer, a seven-year-old Emperor Bing was allegedly drowned in a murder-suicide by a Song dynasty chancellor; the Song era came to an end and the Yuan dynasty was declared with Ghengis Khan's grandson, Kablai Khan – now Emperor Shizu – at its helm. Blue-and-white was to reach new highs as the shades were cherished royal and sacred colours in Mongolian culture as the Khan lineage was said to have been descended from the union of a blue wolf (masculinity, descended from the heavens) and a white fallow deer (femininity)¹³. With the Mongolian empire stretching across the Middle East and Eastern Europe, porcelain could more easily reach a wider audience. Thus, it was during the Yuan (1279–1368) and later Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties that the art of blue-and-white porcelain production would be revived and truly reach its zenith¹⁴. Recent shipwreck discoveries indicate early thriving international relations between China and nearby kingdoms and that porcelain was already a valued import in the Middle East during the Tang dynasty. Cross-culturalism has been key in advancing Chinese porcelain production and many pieces were designed as exports showing influences of Islamic

ceramics and culture. Equally artisans in Persia and nearby countries were greatly inspired by the diverse range of blue-and-white ceramics to appear from Chinese shores and Chinese porcelain not only helped to cement diplomatic relations, but revolutionised local culinary and ornamental traditions and local potters began to make imitation porcelain known as fritware (made from glass and quartz) as early as the 7th century.



Brass Ewer, 700-900, Brass, 29.5cm x 17cm Persia (Iran),



Porcelain Ewer with Peony Scroll, Jingdezhen, China, Porcelain with cobalt blue design, 29.2cm x 24.10cm, 1403-1424 (Ming dynasty)

[Photos: © The Trustees of the British Museum]

Chinese porcelain shapes were influenced by Islamic metalwork, such as this pear-shaped porcelain ewer, which may have been intended for exportation to an Islamic country. The peonies on the body of the porcelain ewer appear frequently in Chinese art and literature as they symbolise wealth and love. Peonies are so highly regarded in Chinese culture that they were even planted in the palace gardens.¹⁵

Porcelain techniques were gradually refined in kilns across China, and it was in Jingdezhen, in the cradle of the Yangtze River and near Gaoling Mountain (a natural source of kaolin), where the Imperial Kilns were established and able to produce some of the finest quality porcelain for the imperial courts. Jingdezhen kilns developed large-scale moulding processes and an astoundingly efficient and advanced early mass production system able to supply porcelain to the whole of China and later meet rocketing international demand. Cobalt blue porcelain painting techniques (such as the 'heap and pile effect') and ceramic printing techniques would also progress, and Jingdezhen would become a world centre for ceramic production and 'the first global brand' from as early as the 14th century.¹⁶



Dish with a dragon and flaming pearl, Jingdezhen, China, 1300-1399 (Yuan dynasty)



Five-clawed Dragon and Scaly Dragon Bowl, 12.5cm x 4.5cm, Jingdezhen, China, 1522-1566 (Ming dynasty)

[Photos: © The Trustees of the British Museum]

The dragon is one of the most widely seen and enduring motifs of Chinese iconography. It is an auspicious mythical figure that is also a symbol of the emperor due to its power and strength. The number of claws of the dragon indicate the purpose of the vessel – originally

appearing with only three claws, four-clawed dragons were intended for Chinese nobility whilst five-clawed dragons were only to be used by the emperor. The use of five-clawed dragon motifs by members of the public was said to have been punishable by death.¹⁷ The dragon often appears chasing a flaming pearl, a multivalent symbol often interpreted as the sun or moon or wisdom and spiritual energy. The single-tone blue background of the plate (left) is unusual and hints at the transition from the single-tone ceramicware of the Song dynasty to the blue-and-white porcelain of the Yuan dynasty.¹⁸



Flower shaped dish with lotus, 16.1cm x 20cm, Jingdezhen, China, 1320-1350 [Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum]¹⁹

Yuan dynasty dish made from imported iron-rich cobalt, which produces a post-firing unevenness called the 'heap and pile' effect where certain areas are light blue and others darker shades. The dish shows lotus flowers and is made with eight sides, which is an auspicious number in Chinese culture. Lotus flowers were often used by ceramic painters after Buddhism gained popularity in China and represent harmony; the number eight is also significant in Buddhism, which values the Eightfold path.



Hexagonal Cup and Saucer, China, 1662-1722 (Qing dynasty) [Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum]

The plate depicts a white crane, which is a traditional symbol of longevity in Chinese art. The hexagonal form of the objects represents the harmony or wholeness of the universe 《六合》(Liùhé) as viewed in traditional Chinese culture as hexagons reflect the six directions of North, West, East, South, Heaven and Earth.²⁰

The arrival of Portuguese merchants in Guangzhou (Southern China) during the Ming dynasty (14th century) roused an early penchant for blue-and-white porcelain in Medieval Europe. The Portuguese forced control of Southern trading ports in Macao, which were located close to China's famed biannual silk fairs that saw the distribution of porcelain to international markets and Ming porcelain exported to Portugal influenced what would later become one of Portugal's most defining cultural customs – striking glazed blue-and-white ceramic tiles known as azulejos portugueses that now decorate building façades and stations throughout the streets of Portuguese cities.²¹



Blue-and-white Clark Porcelain Bowl, Porcelain, Jingdezhen China, 1600-1624 (Ming Dynasty) [Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum]

This bowl was designed for the Portuguese market and shows a European coat-of-arms and Latin inscriptions combined with traditional Chinese lotus flowers and Buddhist instruments. The porcelain type is lower quality than the porcelain reserved for the Chinese courts and was produced in bulk in Jingdezhen kilns.

The establishment of maritime relations with other large European merchant trading companies, such as the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company in the 15th century, meant that tea and low-cost blue-and-white porcelain from Jingdezhen were shipped in large quantities to Europe and overseas European colonies where they would mesmerize and amaze, completely transforming local dining etiquettes.²² Periods of reduced trade links between China and Europe in later centuries lead to the production of imitation blue-and-white porcelain known as bone china in England (made from cattle bones) and Delftware (made from clay and quartz) in the city of Delft in the Netherlands. European ceramists would incorporate local iconography into their designs, such as windmills and yachts, and blue-and-white ceramics would eventually evolve into an art form that no longer



Delftware Tiles, Netherlands [Photo: istockphoto]

represented something uniquely Chinese but expressed the distinct cultural customs and values of differing societies beyond Chinese borders.

Blue-and-white Chinese porcelain has endured as a lasting muse, particularly for textile designers and tailors within China and across the globe. Clear influences of blue-and-white porcelain design can be identified all the way

from early tapestries, rugs, silks and upholstery fabrics to the cushions, curtains and dresses we see today. Its distinctive colour scheme has changed the face of global interior design and fashion and continues to affect the evolution of modern textile industries. Haberdashery aside, Chinese blue-and-white porcelain has proven such a powerful inspiration to designers across a plethora of cultures that influences can be seen in almost

all aspects of public and domestic interior furnishings and ornamentation, including still life paintings, ornamental ceramic displays, mirrors, tiles, furniture and interior accessories, such as door handles and coat hooks. The influence of blue-and-white porcelain on structures as a whole is also evident in the architecture of Southeast Asian, Islamic and European societies and even in the tombs and burial sites of Swahili communities in Kenya and Tanzania.

So how did your blue-and-white dinner plate reach you here in Lewisham in the 21st century? Its journey began more than 1,000 years ago near the waters of the Yellow River in China where a precise methodology for porcelain production was born. Blue-and-white porcelain traditions and techniques were handed down through generations and dynasties and spread across continents, transforming and evolving cultures wherever they went. From the Tang dynasty right through to the modern day, a myriad of exquisite, intricately designed cobalt blue porcelain goods and design techniques have emerged from China and bound themselves into a cultural heritage that still transforms our world today, from social dining, decorative arts, interior design, architecture and fashion to cultural identity and family tradition, blue-and-white porcelain has permeated many folds of our society and proven to be an extraordinary anthropological phenomenon that has forever changed the shape of world arts, culture and history.



Blue and White is more like a symbol for sea and wave. That echo of water drives me somewhere faraway.

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Rachel Kanev

Ceramics are silent bystanders to our everyday routines and shared culinary festivities, they are often displayed in communal spaces in the home and handed down from generation to generation – in an unassuming way, they mould our family experiences.

My grandmother loved blue-and-white porcelain and had many items on display in a large dresser. Later after she died, I acquired one of her vases and I often think of her when I look at it. She used to have a full set of it in her home that we would use at mealtimes; it is in a pattern called Zwiebelmuster, which means 'onion patterned' and is a typical design of the East German Republic (GDR).

My mother also has many blue-and-white items just as my grandmother did. She has a very modern English ceramic jug on display by her kitchen sink; the resemblance of the jug to Tang dynasty ceramics is remarkable and shows just how pioneering and influential ancient Chinese ceramic art was – elements of ancient Chinese culture form part of our lives without us even realising it.

One of my mother's vases is inscribed with the words Man Tang Fu Ji 《满堂福记》 (Mǎntáng fú jì) and depicts the Chinese legend of Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea 《八仙过海》 (Bāxiānguòhǎi). She knew it was Chinese when she bought it but had no idea about the Chinese mythology behind it until now.



Blue-and-white porcelain on my mother's sitting room. The first vase to the left is Qing dynasty style and shows images of the Taoist legend of Eight Immortals.

Chenjin Ying

I used not to appreciate blue-and-white porcelain, but now as I get older, I find I have come to value it more. When I was younger, I thought that it was too traditional and unfashionable, but after I turned 30 and especially after I began drinking Chinese tea more often, I found that blue-and-white porcelain had a quiet beauty – simple and unassuming. Moreover, I am proud that blue-and-white porcelain is a representative work of ancient Chinese porcelain art. My favourite piece of blue-and-white porcelain is a blue-and-white teacup from the Trimentea Gold Series. On weekend afternoons, I will often have tea and read a book, indulging in the peacefulness of a quiet and leisurely time. Chinese people drink tea without sugar or milk, so they have higher requirements for tea and water. We use different tea sets according to different teas. Green tea is usually drunk from a glass as you can appreciate the shape of the tea leaves in the water whilst drinking the tea. Black tea and Pu-erh tea are generally used with a porcelain tea set.

During the Spring Festival, I always go back to my hometown to reunite with my family, share a reunion dinner together and give red envelopes to elderly members of my family and children. During Qingming Festival and Spring Festival, my family and I sweep the ancestors' graves and worship the ancestors. Family is important in our lives and these events bring our family together and increase our bond.



Photo of a tea set we have in our family home in Beijing

When I was six or seven years old, I used to go to my grandmother's house in the countryside of Zhejiang province. The bowls, plates, teapots and cups were all made of blue-and-white porcelain, which were cheap and very popular at that time. My grandmother had four blue-and-white porcelain plates that she had inherited from her parents and seemed to be valuable. She usually used them to entertain guests or worship ancestors on important occasions.

For me, blue-and-white porcelain is one of the representative elements of Chinese art and our cultural heritage. I like it a lot and hope other people like it too.



Porcelain Girl

Amelia Yang

This animation is about my personal experience with cultural identity, self acceptance and understanding of my heritage.

As I was raised in China I attended a private international school managed and founded by American people. I grew up feeling a bit different than the kids from other schools, which wasn't much of a problem for me, but the effect came much later when I moved to New Zealand for high school.

I was always trying to explain to people about my detailed background so I would be more easily accepted. But I wasn't. Three years of self doubt and isolation actually got me to realize, what brought me peace and comfort was nothing but my heritage, Chinese poetry, Chinese traditional music, and my Mongolian instrument. As I grew older and hopefully wiser, the most precious thing I carried with me was the acceptance for my heritage, I stopped denying my cultural identity and finally embraced who I am, it was a great relief for me.



This is an animation about a drop of blue traveling through time and the world through blue and white ceramic and how it changes through out it's journey.

I love seeing different parts of my culture getting the representation it deserves. So, I see this project as a great opportunity to spread knowledge of this traditional craft, especially in other countries and have this culture travel around the world just like how it did in the past.

Traveling Blue

Tang Victoria Hoi Yi



CONTRIBUTORS' BIOS

Tisna Westerhof

Known for her Delft Blue political works about identity and the loss of innocence, Tisna is the creative brain behind this project. While her practice is grounded in printmaking, she revels in breaking down the limitations of materials and reinventing traditional handicrafts, a powerful, personal, political and poetic tool. Interested in people engaged in a project of self-transformation and motivated by the function of art education in society, Tisna uses her voice in ceramics, textiles, installation, painting and printmaking as well as organizing, curating and collaborating with others. All are interconnected and attempt to give voice to the underrepresented and to dream a better world, free of social injustices and intolerance. She currently lives and works between London & Amsterdam, she's a member of The London Group and has exhibited among others at the Venice Biennale, Royal Academy London, The Dutch Centre London, Whitechapel Gallery, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.
www.tisna.com

Cristiana Bottigella

Cristiana is hARTslane managing director and the curator of Come Dine in Blue. She has 20 years' experience in cultural management, having produced many large-scale participatory art projects and exhibitions. Her expertise lies in socially engaged art practices, and in 2012 she co-founded Bait al Karama, the first women-led cookery school

in Palestine, a social enterprise that empowers women and raises awareness on the culinary and intangible heritage of Palestine. Having established and run the artists in residency at the Pistoletto Foundation in Italy for ten years, she has an ongoing interest in the social function of art and in nurturing emerging talents. She offers tailored practice development mentoring and programmes of workshops and talks for artists with socially engaged practices.
www.cristianabottigella.com

hARTslane

hARTslane was founded in 2012 by Cristiana Bottigella, Sigrun Sverrisdottir and Tisna Westerhof, with the aim of saving a council-owned building from commercial development and instead turning it into an inclusive art hub, a place for local people to enjoy and be inspired by the arts. Rooted in South East London but with an international reach, hARTslane aims to break down systemic barriers and to provide creatives with accessible and equal opportunities to produce and exhibit. As a socially engaged art organisation with a focus on community and participation, hARTslane works with professional artists, local residents, community groups and schools to produce relevant art projects that connect people and places, with the collective making process being as important as the outcome.
www.hartslane.org

Frederica Agbah

Frederica Agbah is a Yorkshire born photographer, filmmaker, and visual artist based in London. As an art practitioner, Agbah is influenced by her experience of a peripatetic adolescence, moving abruptly from a nuclear familial upbringing in the north of England to the communal but hectic environment of a busy West African city, intimate and slow moving tribal village life and back again to the west Riding of Yorkshire. Working fully manual in-camera, predominantly with available and ambient light, she works at the intersection of socially engaged documentary photography and moving image with a particular interest in portraiture and biographical film. Agbah's photographic work often focuses on candid opportunistic portraiture featuring subjects approached on the street or at mass participation events. Current work interrogates powerlessness, personal space, fractured identities and problematic relationships. Her practice captures interrelated characters within communities and cliques, constructing layered visual narratives and illuminating shared cultural histories.
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Massimiliano Mollona

Massimiliano (Mao) Mollona is a writer, filmmaker, and anthropologist. He is associate professor at the Department of the Art (DAR) at the University of Bologna and Associate Research Fellow at the Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths University, London. He has a multidisciplinary background in economics and anthropology and his work focuses on the relationship between art and political economy, particularly on issues of work, class, and post-capitalist politics. In his fieldworks Mollona uses a methodology that combines pedagogy, artistic prefiguration, and activism. He is a member of the collective freethought and a co-founder and President of the Institute of Radical Imagination (IRI), which is a collective of activists, artists, and curators who aim to imagine and implement post-capitalist forms of art and life. He was Director of the Athens Biennale, Athens, 2015–2017, and with freethought Co-Director of the Bergen Assembly, 2016. Mollona lives in London and Bologna.
www.unibo.it/sitoweb/massimiliano.mollona

Amanda Holiday

Artist and poet Amanda Holiday completed a degree in Fine Art, before moving into film & script writing - directing short experimental films for the Arts Council, BFI and Channel 4. Her chapbook 'The Art Poems' was published April 2018 as part of New Generation African Poets (Tano) US.

She completed the Poetry MA at the University of East Anglia in 2019 and her writing has appeared in various international journals including *Prairie Schooner* and *Frieze*. Holiday has been a finalist for the Brunel International African Poetry Prize and semi-finalist for the Cave Canem Poetry Prize (US). She is founder of Black Sunflowers an art-oriented small poetry press focussed on the work of women and black poets www.blacksunflowerspoetry.com. Holiday is currently a Techne AHRC doctoral student in Poetry, Race and Art at the University of Brighton. www.amandaholiday.com

Confucius Institute

Goldsmiths Confucius Institute for Dance and Performance is an academic department of Goldsmiths, University of London. We explore all facets of Chinese studies, from language to history, music, philosophy and culture and specialise in Chinese dance and performing arts. The department works in partnership with Beijing Dance Academy and Capital Normal University in China to deliver high calibre undergraduate, postgraduate credit and short courses as well as an extensive Outreach for Schools programme and a variety of Chinese-themed events throughout the year. www.gold.ac.uk/confucius-institute

Rachel Kanev

Rachel has an avid interest in sinology with a particular focus on Chinese philosophy, art and literature. She received her undergraduate degree in Contemporary Chinese Studies from the University of Nottingham and undertook further programmes in Chinese Studies at Sichuan University and Tianjin University of Technology in the years that followed. She lived and worked in China for several years and currently works at Goldsmiths Confucius Institute for Dance and Performance where she enjoys helping to bring elements of Chinese culture to the local Lewisham community.

Chenjin Ying

Chenjin comes from Beijing and has been a resident of Deptford in Lewisham since December 2021. She graduated from Zhejiang Normal University with a BA in Chinese Language and Literature Education and subsequently attended Peking University where she obtained her MA. Chenjin is on secondment from Capital Normal University (CNU) in Beijing and currently works at Goldsmiths Confucius Institute for Dance and Performance where she lectures on undergraduate and credit course modules.

Father Grant Bolton-Debbage

Vicar at All Saints Church, New Cross, London

Alice Qianhui Sun

Chinese artist currently based in London. She graduated with first-class honours in BA (Hons) in Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2022. ALice works with ceramic and painting to employ inventive and fantastical interpretations of emotive, psychologically troubling subjects like the politics of birthrights and gender representation.

Insta [@alice.artroom](https://www.instagram.com/alice.artroom)

Jada Perry

Graphic design student at Ravensbourne University London and coordinator of Be Seen Be Heard Youth Forum, which supports the young (16-25) black community of creatives that reside in the Lewisham borough.

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Fiona Quadri

Fiona Quadri is an illustrative image-maker. Within her work Quadri explores themes of Belonging, Race and Ethnicity through the lens of the QUEER BIPOC communities, aiming to break stereotypical viewpoints.

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Woman from Syria living in Lewisham

She regularly attends Refugee Council meetings and creative workshops with her husband and children.

Amelia Yang (21)

Amelia is an animator/illustrator who's also very passionate about game design. Born in Mainland China, she attended an international school when she was three and grew up in a multicultural and bilingual environment. She moved to New Zealand for her high school degree, then moved to London in 2021.

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Tang Victoria Hoi Yi (19)

Victoria is a Hong Kong artist who is currently studying in London.

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Shoko Sakuma

Shoko is an urban practitioner based in the neighbourhood of New Cross Gate, originally from Sapporo, Japan. She often cycles in this area with her little son, Lemon. She likes visualising the intangible aspects of life. Her recent co-published work: *Stories of displacement from Yangon*.

https://issuu.com/dpu-ucl/docs/stories_of_displacement_from_yangon_online

Fabiola Jimenez

Fabiola is from Ecuador. She lives in South East London





hARTslane



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