AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

A Charter for Decolonising
Amgueddfa Cymru's Collection

Museum collections are often rooted in colonialism and racism. Amgueddfa Cymru is no different.

This charter lays out Amgueddfa Cymru's approach to decolonising its collection. It highlights 6 key areas where we will work with communities across Wales, and beyond, to decolonise the collection, and work towards decolonising the museum itself.

There is no single definition of what decolonising a collection means. It is a complex and lengthy process that will evolve as we explore it in more depth. We will work through these challenges with our community partners and use the collection to confront history and present-day injustices. This will support us to reflect on and change out-dated ways of working.

The decolonising process will be central to developing Amgueddfa Cymru's collection.

It is everyone's responsibility across all collection disciplines, and all museum departments.

Together, we will:

- define what we mean by decolonising Amgueddfa Cymru's collection

- improve community access to and engagement with these collections

- develop many perspectives to support a better understanding and deeper meaning

- develop relationships that value community knowledge, expertise and lived experience

- inform the future use of these collections

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES OF RELEVANCE IS AT THE HEART OF THIS WORK.

Decolonising Amgueddfa Cymru's collection will focus on 6 key areas of work.

1. Community action research

A programme of community action research will identify collections linked to colonial aggression and the transatlantic slave trade. We will explore how these objects came into the possession of the museum and seek to understand their deeper meaning.

We will also research the links between the establishment of the museum and colonialism and the slave trade.

2. Co-curating content

Decolonising the collection means giving clear and explicit information to audiences on the history of objects and how they were collected. We will change the content, tone, and terminology of the colonial histories that some of our collections reflect. Labelling of objects needs to be honest and developed with community members.

Collections that have links to colonial aggression or the transatlantic slave trade will be labelled as such across all our platforms. We also recognise the importance of keeping the history of how objects have been interpreted in the past. This record of an object's history should be archived, not deleted.

3. Identifying racist collections

Some objects in the collection are racist and will be identified and labelled as such.

This includes the Natural Sciences. We will review this collection for racist science references, and ensure that material we use in exhibitions, events and publications have explanations.

We commit to editing and rewriting labels and artwork titles that include racially sensitive words, or descriptions of black people which are inappropriate. We will constantly review the language we use to ensure that it reflects best current usage.

4. Decision making about acquisitions

Amgueddfa Cymru will support a more diverse range of voices in deciding what we collect. We want to increase representation and decolonise collections at the point of entry to the museum.

We will ensure that due diligence is applied to collections we already hold. We will play a positive role in forming partnerships with communities of origin, and legitimate owners, to explore the potential for restitution and repatriation based on cooperation and understanding.

5. Collections access Cataloguing

Cataloguing processes can limit the diverse ways people engage with objects.

We will develop new ways to search and explore collections that are relevant to everyday lives, to make them as accessible as possible. By exploring new digital ways of working, we will crowd source new search terms for collections.

6. Digital

We aim to digitise all objects that are part of the decolonisation of Amgueddfa Cymru collections.

Digitised collections can reach audiences and communities of relevance across the world. **Collections Online** will support sharing and capturing new interpretations, meaning and relevance. Local stories can link globally to challenge the othering of different societies.

Methodology

- A sample of objects from across each collection discipline will be used to pilot ways of working with communities of relevance and support the development of community action researchers.

- Workshops with staff and community members will ensure greater understanding of the process, and why Amgueddfa Cymru is committed to this work.

- Ways of working digitally and non-digitally will be developed to ensure the fullest participation possible.

- The pilot process will be used to develop a toolkit for decolonising Amgueddfa Cymru's collection across the 6 areas of work and establish workflows that support the decolonising process.

- Definitions and criteria for reviewing the collection should be developed with our community partners and communities of relevance so that work is consistent across the collection.

- We need to be honest about what we can and can't achieve. For example, it might not be possible to establish whether some objects are linked to slavery in some instances.

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