

## DECR Bios

### **Sonny Ruggiero**

#### **(Chair of the DECR Committee and Network)**

Sonny Ruggiero is a final-year PhD researcher at the University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh College of Art). Her thesis focuses on 20<sup>th</sup>-century feminist print media, specifically *Spare Rib* magazine, through a visual and material culture methodology. Sonny holds a B.A. in Sociocultural Anthropology from University of California, Davis and an MSc from University of Edinburgh in Modern and Contemporary Art: History, Curating, and Criticism. She is the current Chair of the Doctoral and Early Career Research Committee (DECR) for the Association for Art History, was awarded runner-up for Tutor of the Year at the University of Edinburgh in 2021 and has volunteered and worked within various arts institutions including the Talbot Rice Gallery, Fruitmarket, Glasgow International and Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival.

### **Alia Soliman**

Alia Soliman holds an MA in Comparative Literature from the American University in Cairo and a PhD in Cultural Studies from the Centre of Multidisciplinary and Intercultural Inquiry at University College London, UK. Her interests and teaching methods are interdisciplinary. She is a creative-critical writer who was nominated for the Pushcart award. She has published a number of peer-reviewed articles on ekphrastic writing, contemporary Arab visual art, reading and alterity, digitization and cultural heritage, and the intersection of memory and image. Her monograph *The Doppelgänger in Our Time: Visions of Alterity in Literature, Visual Culture, and New Media* is forthcoming from Peter Lang Publishers UK. She is currently a Lecturer of Cultural and Visual Studies at NYUAD.

### **Amy Melia**

#### **(Joint Vice Chair and Secretary)**

Amy Melia is an early career researcher, educator, and PhD graduate from Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). Funded by LJMU's Vice Chancellor Scholarship scheme, Amy's PhD research explored the urban Marxist tendencies of contemporary art and, broadly speaking, critical engagements with the urban environment as a site of creative activity. Her research examined how contemporary art practice responds to the social urgencies of capitalist urbanism, i.e. the housing crisis, gentrification and the degradation of the urban social milieu. She has taught on the BA (Hons) History of Art and Museum Studies programme at LJMU and is a Visiting Lecturer at Liverpool Hope University. Connecting to the themes of her research, Amy works as a Project Officer for a Liverpool-based social enterprise called PLACED that aims to bring the community voice into the design of the urban built environment.

### **Bea Gassmann de Sousa**

Bea Gassmann de Sousa is an interdisciplinary early career researcher. She holds a doctorate (PhD) in History of Art from the University College London, with full departmental funding. Her central research focuses on *West African Post-Traditionalism and the epistemological foundations of anti-colonial cultural activism*. Her work queries constructions of non-European modernism(s) through the lens of biculturalism, interculturality and gender fluidity. She is currently a project based collaborative researcher for Tate Modern.

Publications include peer-reviewed papers on working with continental African archives and forthcoming chapters on African-rooted perspectives in art. She is an active member of two research groups, the multi-sited inter-continental *Multiple Artistic Mobilities* on Germanophone and continental African connections in the Cold War Era and *Black Europe* at the UCL European Institute on cross-disciplinary constructions of race, nationhood, modernity, and their entanglements in Europe.

### **Cai Lyons**

Cai received their PhD from the University of Birmingham in 2023. Their doctoral thesis critically analysed the career of Dublin-born artist Mary Swanzy, forwarding the artist's exhibiting practice as pivotal to Swanzy's professionalism in the early twentieth century. Cai is currently transforming this thesis into a monograph. More broadly, Cai's research interests include the materiality and lives of artworks in exhibition, artworks as ambiguous spaces of colonial and imperial encounters, professional identities of women artists in the early twentieth century, and Irish women artists of the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

### **Danielle Smith**

Danielle Smith is a historian of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Spanish art. From 2017-2021 she was the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispanica David Wilkie Scholar at the University of Edinburgh, where her doctoral research examined the production and reception of sartorial imagery in Spain. Her current research focuses on catalogues raisonnés.

### **Lavinia Amenduni**

Lavinia is a doctoral candidate at the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich and 2023 holder of the Bayern Fellowship at the Central Institute of Art History in Munich. Her research focuses on stylistic comparisons between Western and Far Eastern art in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century EuroAmerican scholarship, and how the categories of temporality and spatiality enable the comparative paradigm.

### **Marjotte Miles**

Marjotte Miles is undertaking an ESRC-funded PhD entitled "Museums, Big Data, and the Violence of Empire" at the University of Liverpool. Her research investigates how colonial violence has been conceptualised through collecting, technology, and museum displays. Marjotte also teaches for Art History Link-Up, a charity that enables students from diverse backgrounds to have direct access to visual culture. She is the recipient of the Sir Denis Mahon Art History Essay Prize and is currently working with the Ashmolean on their "Decolonising the Database" project.

### **Nancy Ba**

Nancy Ba is a PhD student at Sorbonne Université (Centre André Chastel), with funding from the Observatoire des Patrimoines de Sorbonne Université. Her thesis delves into the depiction of the African figure in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century French sculpture, exploring the symbolic and material aspects of skin color as a racial marker. It scrutinizes how sculptors confronted color's materiality with African skin tones, examines industry

networks in sculpture coloring, and questions the generality of identity-stripped portraits in the colonial context.

### **Nikki Kane**

Nikki Kane is a Lecturer in Creative Industries, based in History of Art, at the University of Glasgow. She completed her PhD at the University of Edinburgh, with support from an AHRC Creative Economies Studentship, where her thesis was titled 'Making Art and Making a Living: The role of festivals in contemporary art careers'. She is currently researching artist-run initiatives with support from the British Art Network, and teaches courses on contemporary creative practice, cultural labour and policy, and cultural institutions.

### **Olivia Garro**

Olivia is a final-year PhD researcher at the Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities at Coventry University, working on the iconographies of witchcraft in the Italian Renaissance and early baroque period and in particular on Guazzo's 1608 *Compendium Maleficarum*. She holds a MA from the Warburg Institute in Art History, Curatorship and Renaissance Culture, held in collaboration with the National Gallery of London, and a previous one from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze in Curation and Design of Arts Exhibitions, where she also gained her BA in Prints and Drawings. She has worked in a number of roles at the British Museum, where she is currently with the Events & Conferencing Department and has volunteered for the Digitisation Project at the Courtauld Institute and at the Royal Society of Sculptors. She is currently Chair of the Institute of Historical Research's PGRs Network, the HistoryLab. Olivia also teaches Italian and is lecturing at Coventry University for the Philosophy BA.

### **Pragya Sharma**

Pragya Sharma is an AHRC Technē-funded PhD researcher in the History of Design at the University of Brighton. Her research project with the working title 'Cultures of Hand-knitting in North India: Provenance, Domesticity and Gendered Learning, c.1850-1980' unravels and decenters histories of hand-knitting from the Indian subcontinent, intertwining colonial and gender histories. She is also interested in researching histories of other domestic crafts in India including crochet, lace-making and needlework. Before starting her PhD, Pragya was engaged as a full-time Design Academic in New Delhi, India

### **Sean Cham**

Sean Cham is an AHRC-funded PhD researcher on a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) project between Birkbeck, University of London and The National Gallery, London. His research, titled 'Networks of Empire, Family, and Art in London's National Gallery, 1824-1874', examines the legacies of the British Empire in the National Gallery. In particular, he is interested in the connections between the British East and West Indies, and the Gallery, through both its collections and the individuals (trustees, directors, donors, vendors) who contributed to the institution's foundations. He is also working on a digital humanities project with The Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, University College London. Prior to starting his PhD, he was a practising artist.

### **Senah Tuma**

Senah Tuma is a second-year PhD researcher within the University of Cambridge. Her research-practise considers decolonising public museums & galleries. She does so through the non-representational, with an awareness of racialised affective atmospheres, and advocates for considerations of such in future socio-spatial design. While she is based in the Education department, she approaches the 'arts' as a human right, and thus as a transdisciplinary concern. As such, she holds a BA in History of Art from the University of York, as well as a MPhil in Arts, Creativity & Education from the University of Cambridge. As an early-career researcher, Senah has organised and held symposiums, exhibitions, workshops, and exhibited her own artworks.