

South-West Asian and North African (SWANA) Cultural Belongings Volunteer

**Role description**

The Horniman Museum and Gardens has been open since 1901 when the tea trader and philanthropist, Frederick Horniman, first opened his house and extraordinary collection of objects to the local community. Since then, the Museum has grown significantly and includes internationally important collections of Anthropology and musical instruments, as well as an Aquarium, a Butterfly House and Natural History Gallery – all surrounded by 16 acres of beautiful Gardens.

**Main purpose**

The Horniman Museum and Gardens has been reflecting on its colonial legacies and histories of accession of its collections over the past few years as part of its commitment to reparative justice. This has led to the repatriation and return of ownership of various cultural belongings. Despite recent progress with researching and centring community voices within the North African belongings, namely Egypt, extensive history of acquisition research on the nearly 10,000 South West Asian and North African (SWANA) cultural belongings remains to be done.

This fixed term volunteer placement, based in the Content Team, within Anthropology will play a key role in supporting research into the history of acquisition and collecting of the SWANA archaeological and anthropological cultural belongings with the aim to identify and improve Indigenous community access and build transparent and open connections with the diverse communities of descent in their respective countries of origin and in the diaspora, particularly those who are local to the Horniman.

Tasks include:

* Assisting the Senior Curator of Anthropology with archival research into the history of acquisition and collecting practices of the SWANA belongings at the Horniman;
* Carrying out research, using Horniman’s collections’ database, identifying gaps in existing entries and descriptions;
* Assisting the Senior Curator of Anthropology in identifying and developing potential community-led collections research plan

**Level of commitment and any conditions**

This is a fixed-term volunteer placement, once a week on Wednesdays, six months starting in mid-April 2025.

Due to the nature of tasks required and level of supervision available, this role is only open to those aged 18 or over.

As this role involves access to Horniman IT systems, a basic DBS check is required.

**This role would suit someone who:**

* is interested in decolonising histories of museum collections
* is interested in museum research
* is interested in making museums more inclusive and open
* is able to volunteer independently and with minimum supervision

We particularly encourage applicants who identify as SWANA descendants and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Fluency in any of the SWANA local dialects is an advantage.

Basic knowledge of using museums’ collection management databases would be an advantage, however, training on using Horniman’s Mimsy collection database will be provided.

**The museum offers volunteers:**

* A supportive, learning environment and the opportunity to gain valuable experience
* Reimbursement of travel expenses within Greater London; lunch expenses are available if volunteering a full day
* Free entry to paid areas of the Horniman museum

**To apply**

Please complete the online application form or ask for an application by emailing: [volunteering@horniman.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@horniman.ac.uk)

**Closing date for applications: Sunday 30th March**

Informal interviews will be held on **Wednesday 9th April** with an anticipated mid April start date.

Approved by Volunteering Manager 04/02/2025