

OPENING ARCHIVES CASE STUDY

SOUTH LONDON GALLERY

Places Never Seen

A youth-led, digital exploration of the 1911 Festival of Empire



HERITAGE DOMAIN:

Museums, Libraries and Archives.

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

This project invited local young people to critically and creatively examine an example of local colonial history and to develop open access digital outputs through Wikimedia. Participants from South London Gallery's young people's forum, the Art Assassins, took the lead in researching and re-examining the 1911 Festival of Empire. Through this project, the Art Assassins developed archival research and digital storytelling skills, engaging with online platforms including Wikimedia and FrameVR.

PROJECT STATS (data accurate as of April 2022):

- Art Assassins members took part in 14 workshops in digital skills and on the 1911 Festival of Empire, led by artists, researchers and guest speakers.
- 30 young people were engaged through 134 engagements.
- 12 days of new research work on the 1911 Festival of Empire was completed by young researchers.

SUCCESES:

- Working with the young researchers worked fantastically. Having young people at the lead felt true to the project and offered a significant opportunity to two people at the beginning of their careers.
- The partnership with UAL's Creative Computing Institute.
- The creation of a digital world by the Art Assassins that can be viewed publicly and will be presented as part of a Decolonising Wikipedia event in May.
- The virtual world created by the Art Assassins came together really well and is an interesting record of the project itself, authored and voiced by the participants.

LEARNINGS:

- Scale back some of the planned outcomes or extend the overall project timeline.
- Give more time for Wikipedia sessions and think about how these are accessible to all young people at different educational levels.

TOP TIP FOR WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES AND ARCHIVES:

If working with young people, ensure they are given the opportunity to lead and amplify their voice. When working with sensitive archives you must give space for people's emotional responses to the material. Even in spaces where we are expected to remain 'neutral'. Anticipate conflict - there are always different ideas of what story 'should' be told.

LINK TO DIGITAL OUTPUTS:

<https://framevr.io/places-never-seen/>

<https://festivalofempire.myblog.arts.ac.uk/project-phase-2/>

