

 **CONTAINED TERRAIN:** 

Conversations about collecting natural histories

STUART HALL LIBRARY | 16th MAY 2022

16 John Islip St, London SW1P 4JU



Image credits: Image taken by Emii Alrai on trips to Land's End and Dunnet Head, 2021-2022. Courtesy of the Artist.

For the first study day in the second year our of Future Collect programme, we will gather at Stuart Hall Library to focus on questions about natural history and what happens when natural artefacts are placed in collections. What kind of narratives emerge when we collect nature and what histories are lost in this process? How does this link to the histories written into natural landscapes and their geographies?

Drawing from Emii Alrai's interest and work with natural and cultural heritage, particularly throughout the making of her Future Collect commission 'A Core of Scar', we will dive into what it means to work with nature, decolonise natural collections, and the tension between decay and conservation in this work.

Join us for a day of thinking together, where we will hear from and work with Emii as well as her collaborators and other practitioners, artists, and researchers engaging with similar questions in their work. These study days are envisaged as moments to come together and think through ideas collectively through gathering, reading, conversation and workshops.


We want to create a space where we can discuss ideas in progress, new and ongoing work as well as think through things together and further interrogate ideas, perceptions, and histories of natural heritage. Please come prepared to be in conversation, share and engage in a collective process of gathering with the intention of learning alongside each other.

[LINK TO EVENT ON WEBSITE HERE](#)

SCHEDULE

- 10:30 Arrive at Stuart Hall Library & Check-in
- 10:45 - 11:00 Hello & Introduction to the day from Rohini, Amber, Emii & Anahi
- 11:00 - 11:30 Introductions from those in the room
- 11:30 - 12:00 **Reading Circle**, led by Emii and Amber
- 12:00 - 12:30 Open Discussion
- 12:30 - 12:35 **BREAK**
- 12:35- 13:05 Ayesha Keshani & Harun Morrison on:
ARTIST & CREATIVE RESPONSES TO COLLECTING NATURAL HERITAGE
Facilitated & Supported by Amber Li
- 13:05 - 13:45 Open Discussion
- 13:45 - 14:30 **LUNCH** (*served at the Library OR outside, depending on the weather*)
- 14:30 - 15:00 Emii Alrai & Naima Hassan on:
CURATORIAL APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH NATURAL HERITAGE
Title of Naima's presentation: Geniza for African Forms
- 15:00 - 15:40 Open Discussion
Facilitated & Supported by Rohini Malik Okon
- 15:40 - 16:00 Conclusions & Goodbye!

BIOS

 **Ayesha Keshani** is an artist, museum worker and PhD candidate in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her art/research practice explores the tensions between coloniality, cosmos and nature in Southeast Asian natural history museums, with particular focus on the histories and futures of the Sarawak Museum, Malaysian Borneo. She reads the Museum's zoology galleries through Sarawak's complex colonial and postcolonial histories, its associated environmental politics, and the multiple alam – multiple natures or worlds – which overlap and intersect across the Museum. Through this, she aims to test the potential of cosmopolitical museology, both as a curatorial practice and as a mode of research engagement in relation to museum institutions.

Her work draws from museum archives and exhibits, community narratives, collaborative practices, and associated video, sound, image and text, to ask what it means to inhabit the museum from its interstices. Her wider project, *Other Museums*, is a rolling series of museum interventions through artist publications, web-based projects, performance lectures, small-scale installations and participatory workshops.

She has worked in exhibition planning and design for various museums between Malaysia and Vietnam for the last decade. Socials: @m_u_z_i_u_m / othermuseums.org



Museum as Plantation (video still, 2022), Ayesha Keshani

🌱 **Emii Alrai** (b.1993, Blackpool) is an artist based in Leeds. Her practice is informed by inherited nostalgia, geographical identity, and post-colonial museum practices of collecting and displaying objects. Focusing on ancient mythologies from the Middle East alongside personal oral histories of Iraq, she weaves together narratives by forging artefacts and visualising residues of cultural collision. Alrai creates monumentally-scaled installations which play on museological displays and dioramas. She draws attention to the clash between the polished aesthetics of imperial museums and the states of ruin which befall archaeological artefacts and their landscapes of excavation. Alrai's art often contains elements which appear broken or unfinished. In this, they point towards moments of rupture and of diasporic separation from homeland. Their incompleteness asks the viewer to imagine archaeological sites as spaces of active memory. emiialrai.com



Images taken by Emii Alrai on trips to Land's End and Dunnet Head, 2021-2022.

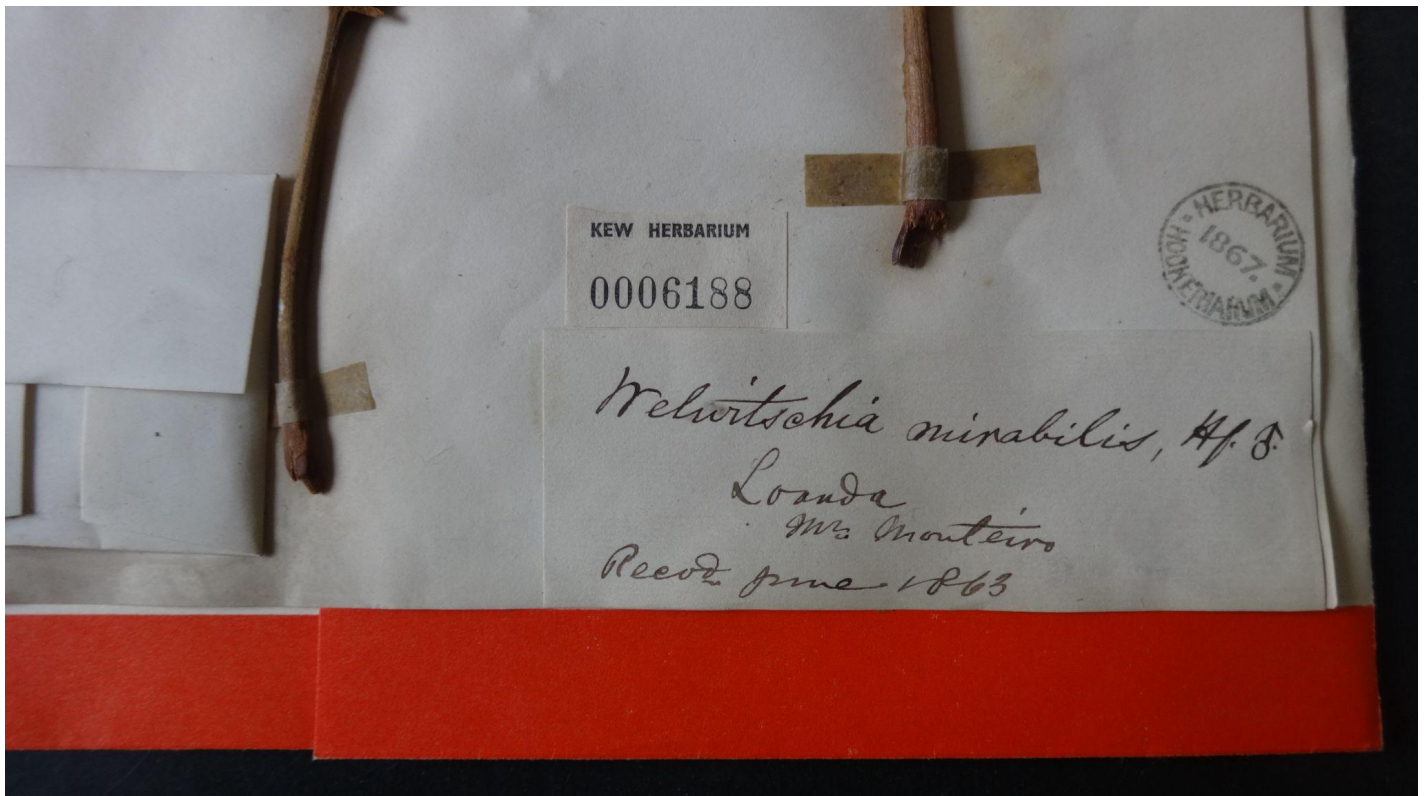
Harun Morrison is an artist and writer based on the inland waterways. He was the 20/21 recipient of the Wheatley Fine Art Fellowship, hosted by Birmingham School of Art, Birmingham City University and Eastside Projects. He is currently Designer and Researcher in Residence at V&A Dundee. His forthcoming novel, *The Escape Artist* will be published by Book Works in 2023. Since 2006, Harun has collaborated with Helen Walker as part of the collective practice *They Are Here*. Harun has recently exhibited at Nieuwe Vide project space in Haarlem, Netherlands ('Mark The Spark' 17.03 - 15.05.22) and has a forthcoming exhibition at the Horniman Museum this summer. He is currently part of the APAP Performing Arts Network. Recent commissions include *I'll Bring You Flowers* (2019) *Survival Kit 10*, Riga, *Laughing Matter* (2018) at Studio Voltaire, the performance *40 Temps, 8 Days* (2017) at Tate Modern and *Beacon Garden* (2018 - 2020), a commission to co-design and community build a public garden in Dagenham, East London. This summer Harun continues to develop and repair a garden for Mind Sheffield, a mental health support service, as part of the Art Catalyst research programme *Emergent Ecologies*.
 Socials: IG : @harunishere/ T:@harunmorrison, harunmorrison.net



Image courtesy of Harun Morrison

Naima Hassan is an anthropologist who works in museums and within curatorial practice. She is interested in the social lives of African objects, and in the biotic process of decay and ruination in museums. Informed by new African museology, Naima is the initiator of *Geniza for African Forms*, a counter-mapping project exploring colonial botanical and material culture expeditions in East and Southern Africa, departing from the Royal Geographical Society of Britain's Second Zambezi expedition (1858-1864). Naima is a long-term associate of Numbi Arts, the non-profit behind the first Somali Museum in Europe, and has extensively researched the Diana Powell-Cotton Somali Collections (1934-35) held at the Powell Cotton Museum, Kent UK. She is also Social Media Editor for *100 Histories of 100 Worlds in 1 Object* and incoming DAAD Museums Lab Fellow, a European and African programme jointly organized by German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Museum für Naturkunde

(MfN), Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin (HTW). During this fellowship, she will undertake residence at the Museum Volkenkunde, part of Research Centre for Material Culture, a flagship research institution which serves as a focal point for research on ethnographic collections in the Netherlands. Naima is an alumni attaché of the British Institute in Eastern Africa and has worked with Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, Open Society Foundations, National Maritime Museum and Timespan Museum. Naima has studied at the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford and Department of Politics and International Relations, Goldsmiths, University of London. Her curatorial debut, Memory Materials: Ceremony for Living Objects takes place 19 August - 24 September 2022 at Two Queens Leicester, UK. naimasfieldnotes.com



Geniza for African Forms (Project Image Naima Hassan 2022)

FUTURE COLLECT & EMII ALRAI:

- To learn more about the Future Collect programme, please see [here](#).
- To learn more about Emii Alrai's commission 'A Core of Scar' - currently on show at the Hepworth Wakefield, please see [here](#).

ACCESS INFO:

- None of the participants are BSL users, so we will not have BSL interpretation at the event.
- We will have a quiet space available for anyone who needs it during the day
- We will make any texts & resources that we use available to you all next week via email
- We will have printouts of these texts and resources in the space
- You can find more info about the library's access provisions [here](#) (with information on how to get to the library)
- The day will be run in a relaxed way with comfort breaks and refreshments made available for everyone
- If you've made any other specific access requests I will email you separately to coordinate!