‘The project of decolonisation is less about seeking out authentic culture as such but more about the opening up of creative spaces to facilitate the production of culture informed by indigenous thinking and doing.’

Gurnam Singh, 2018
LCC Library’s Printing Historical Collection charts the history and art of the Western book, reflecting its physical, technical and aesthetic development from the 15th to 21st centuries. The foundations of the collection were laid in the 1960s. The collection is therefore historical and can be problematic in that representation of certain voices is higher in printing history and mainstream published works; namely, the voice of the white, middle-class, European male. Just as ‘colonial perceptions and mindsets are embedded into the fabric of our institutional structures’ (Hansika Jethnani, 2018, *Decolonising the Arts Curriculum* zine) so they are embedded within our library collections.

LCC special collection librarians seek to challenge these dominant voices, to recognise the multiple, systemic barriers and multiple forms of prejudice faced by those who sit outside of the dominant culture and the ways in which their voices have been erased or silenced in printing and publishing history. Decolonising collections is one part of a broader critical practice with which we aim to ensure collection development is as diverse and inclusive as possible. We are diversifying our collections to be inclusive of BAME voices, culturally diverse voices, international voices, women’s voices, LGBTQ+ voices, working class voices...

‘The project of decolonisation is less about seeking out authentic culture as such but more about the opening up of creative spaces to facilitate the production of culture informed by indigenous thinking and doing.’

Gurnam Singh, 2018
Colonialism and its impact

Given the focus of the Printing Historical Collection, these books will primarily have been collected to demonstrate the changing processes of book production, rather than their content. Yet the items shown here reveal something else, our colonial past. Some provide evidence of dissenting voices which were critical of colonialism at the time, but most are the product of and therefore are unquestioning of colonialism.
Diverse voices and cultural production

Over the past decade the practice of diversifying collections has in part been possible through the development of the artists’ books and zine collections, allowing us to adopt more creative approaches to collection development. The inclusion of alternative or underground publications ensures voices outside or against the mainstream are represented, allowing LCC’s special collections to evolve to incorporate inclusivity and diversity. The zine collection contains zines that are varied in topic: class, sexual identity, gender and body politics, race, ethnicity and faith, mental health, and personal interest. The zines and artists’ books shown here demonstrate ‘the opening up of creative spaces to facilitate the production of culture’ (Gurnam Singh, 2018, Decolonising the Arts Curriculum zine) and the empowerment of self-publishing.

*Publishing is “an independent validation of one’s own culture, history, and politics”... (it) “implies autonomy and initiative – the validation of ourselves.”* John La Rose (founder of New Beacon Books), 1969, quoted on OOMK website http://oomk.net/blog/issue_2_deep_roots.html
New Maroons

Happy Birthday
Bredrin

Liberation Support Movement

NOT NIGHTMARES

DIY DIASPORA

Women of Color '73

President.

Ritual Tree

Understanding

Feel Happy. Feel better.
The Inside guide to
The Fabulous
Show your online audience
within 2 weeks on Instagram.
Shelves of uncatalogued documents (books, artefacts, ephemera) are not an untypical occurrence behind the scenes in any library. At LCC library our uncatalogued documents have accumulated for a variety of reasons over the decades.

_Common Ground_ – a British Council 2003 ‘major photography exhibition, which attempts to explore the range and diversity of British Muslims’ experience of life in the UK’ – was recently ‘found’ in our uncatalogued items shelves having been there since 2003.

Considering the fact that exhibitions for and of race and gender voices in the major art institutions are the exception – it has to be questioned why this important document was not catalogued and made accessible to students and staff at UAL for 15 years.
This is Whiteness: white privilege and white centring.

Whiteness: Defined as a set of characteristics and experiences that are attached to the white race and white skin. In the US and European contexts, whiteness marks one as normal and the default. While people in other racial categories are perceived as and treated as ‘other’, whiteness comes with a wide variety of privileges. (SoN, 2018, p. 137)

Disclaimer: Presenting and viewing this ‘everyday event’ through the Critical Race Theory lens acts as a provocation for dialogue within the library service and academic institution.

References


SoN ToR (2018) Peekaboo we see you whiteness. Available at: https://shadesofnoir.org.uk/peekaboo-we-see-you-whiteness/

Elphinstone Dayrell (1869–1917) a British colonial administrator, was the district commissioner for Ikom in the South Eastern province of Nigeria when he ‘gathered the stories told to him by the local Efik Ibibio people’. ‘Dayrell’s collection of tales’ was published in 1910 as *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, West Africa* by Longmans, Green and Co. publishing company [1].

Approximately seventy years later Willow Legge (wife of Ron King from the Circle Press) found Dayrell’s story ‘Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky’ in the 1952 anthology: *African Folktales and Sculpture* by Paul Radin and designed by E. McKnight Kauffer [2]. *An African Folktale* is an adaptation of this Efik Ibibio traditional tale.

This is cultural misappropriation.

*Cultural misappropriation ... It’s a place where one culture (most often one that has an historical record of oppressing other cultures: white) engages in the unauthorised taking/stealing of some aspects of another (most often an oppressed) culture without consent. But it doesn’t end with just that primary format*. (SoN, 2018)

Disclaimer: Documenting the historical record of this item held in the LCC library’s special collection acts as a provocation for dialogue within the academic institution.

References


SoNAdmin (2017) Cultural appropriation and cultural misappropriation on your course? Available at : https://shadesofnoir.org.uk/cultural-appropriation-and-cultural-misappropriation-on-your-course/

Smithsonian Libraries (n.d.) Artists’ books and Africa. Available at: https://library.si.edu/exhibition/artists-books-and-africa/african-folktale-full

Image 2 (Krewinkel, 2015)
why the sun and the moon live in the sky
3 A LCC Library Special Collections critical pedagogy proposal to highlight ‘a hegemonic discourse that the current art and design system privileges: the European-white male’ (Reilly, 2012, p. 12).

Working with the LCC Printing Historical Collection is a challenge because the collection and its character is not inclusive. Actively working with this teaching collection could be said to perpetuate the discriminatory narratives and ideals of the hegemony.

To inspire, experience and inform are the attributes of learning engagement that the special collection librarian uses to select and display documents from the collection. Yet despite our considered exhibition schedules the ‘omnipotence’ of the ‘biased representation’ often negates the function of any exhibition.

This proposal aims to shift the gaze of the collection from the hegemonic to the critical pedagogical by providing the means for students to question the documents exhibited and displayed. In turn, the teaching and learning function of the Printing Historical Collection is renewed for today’s academy.

The proposal:
Add the following label when and where applicable to any item displayed and exhibited.

Disclaimer: Actively encouraging students to question and challenge the collections held in UAL libraries acts a provocation for dialogue between students and the library service.

References
European-White-Male
Exhibition documents

The Printing Historical Collection
Adelaide A. Procter (ed.) (1861) Victoria Regia, a Volume of Original Contributions in Poetry and Prose

Provocations
Amyandtanveer [and eight others] (2003) Common ground: Aspects of contemporary British Muslim experience
Willow Legge (1979) An African folktale

Colonialism and its impact
W.H.D. Rouse & Heath Robinson (1973) The giant crab, and other tales from Old India Adapted from tales from ‘The Jataka’ translated, in part, by W.H.D. Rouse
Caspar van Baerle (1631) Casparis Barlei Poematum
Sir Alfred Lyall (1889) Verses written in India
Bernard Shaw (1935) The adventures of the black girl in her search for God
W. M. Macmillian (1938) Warning from the West Indies: a tract for the Empire
Norman Angell & Dorothy Frances Buxton (1939) You and the refugee: the morals and economics of the problem
V.G. Calderon (1938) The white llama: being La Venganza del Condor / now translated into English for the first time by Richard Phibbs; engravings by Clifford Webb

Diverse voices and cultural production
Maria Lucia Cattani (2005) 4 cantos do mundo = 4 corners of the world = Heimshornin 4
Text in Portuguese, English, Icelandic and Japanese. Based on a work in four parts based in four public collections around the world
Sherley C. Olopherne (2014) Black Lesbians in the 80’s @ Lesbian Herstory Archives
Sherley C. Olopherne (2014) Black Lesbians in the 90’s @ Lesbian Herstory Archives
Sherley C. Olopherne (2014) Black Lesbians @ Lesbian Herstory Archives 2000-10
Jaqc Applebee (date unknown) Black like outer space
Jaqc Applebee (date unknown) A blaze of candles on my cake: growing old when you’re bisexual, black and disabled
Anonymous (date unknown) Black Simpson. #5.
Night Pong (2014) A brief foray into Japanese psych music
Seleena Laverne Daye (2014) Brown girl
Miho (1985) China =: (Chung-kuo) Kromekote opens up a whole new world.
Marja de Sanctis (2016) Citrus Tree Disease
Rudy Loewe(2015?) Conversations about our hair

Various contributors (2015) Drawing black lives in the East End
Marcia X (2014?) Documenting the reclamation: X: I am multi-racial. It is all within me, yet I don’t fully belong to any one nation. I am diaspora X."
Debora Gutman(2007) Fabulous: a base de recursos graficos
Jacob V Joyce, (2014) Fear brown queers: returning and de-centering the white gaze: an ongoing visual essay
Anonymous (date unknown) Ghosts of Japan
Melina Dorfman (c2005) Gonzalo fanzine: conversaciones, monologos, revelaciones, declaraciones sobre sexo / [Melina Dorfman].
Ho Ling Tso (2016) How to become a goddess: feel happy, feel beautiful: the selfie guide to become the fabulous woman
Anthony p. (2000) I am not my job
Bol Marjoram(1997) [India song]
Josh MacPhee (2016) Liberation support movement
Claudia von Vacano (date unknown) Lost I.D.: feminist women of color shout /
Ral Veroni (2003) Lucha por la vida = Struggle for life
Ms. Frizz (2002) Made with tender loving care. 1
C.A. Burland (1953) Magic books from Mexico
Britt Nance Letcher (2016)
A man was lynched yesterday:
a sad black queer transboi's
thoughts on the murders of
Alton Sterlin and Philando
Castile / Bamboo & Dumpling (date
unknown) Mellow yellow / [Issue 2] / this episode...is
brought to you by Bamboo...and Dumpling.
Marya Errin Jones (2012)
Mocha chocolata momma: Bessie Coleman
Marya Errin Jones (2013)
Mocha chocolata momma. Volume #2, Zoe Washburne
Marya Errin Jones (2015)
Mocha chocolata momma zine. Volume #3, Salaria Kea:
a black nurse in Republican Spain
Rosi (2012) Not straight, not white, not male
Sofia Niazi (ed)(2013) One of my kind (OOMK). Issue two, Print
Sofia Niazi (ed)(2015) One of my kind (OOMK). Issue five, Collecting
Misha Maltsev (ed) (2011)
Partisan: political Indian documentary filmmakers in conversation / 1
Rudy & Daniel (eds.)(date unknown) Plantain zine
Seleena Laverne Daye & Em Ledger (2015) Poor lass. Health issue
Eloisa Aquino (2014) Pajubá: the language of Brazilian travestis
Proletarian gob (1995)
Proletarian gob. No. 6, Autumn 1995
Jacob V. Joyce (2017)
QTIPOC Assemble!: Radical imaginations of queer, trans & intersex people of colour. Volume one
David Tremlett(1985) Rough ride: works made in Africa, Australia, Mexico
Ms Dorothy Damage (2014)
A short compendium of significant African-American hairstyles & other related ephemera
Osa Atue (2015) Shotgun Seamstress, No. 8,
Megan Pickering (2016)
Silenced Feminism: inspired by Spare Rib
Yasuo Kume (1980) Tesuki washi shuho: Fine handmade papers of Japan / Vol. 1
Renato (2010) Tijolada cônscio 6 Brazilian punk fanzine
BORN N BREAD (2017)
WERK: Work experience real knowledge
DIY Diaspora Punx (2017)
What it’s like to be a punk of colour: a zine to accompany the first ever Decolonise-Fest /
Bad Mouth & Boileroom (2015) What is your activism? a workshop series
Jacob V. Joyce (2014) White boys: a simple zine about white men
Charlotte Richardson Andrews (2013) Working class queers. Issue #1
BORN N BREAD (date unknown) The Yard Chronicles
Melanie Santin (date unknown) You’ll see it. Issue 1, [A juxtaposition of the traditional and modern - in Japan Photographs of Japan
Grace Barber-Plentie [and six others] (2015) Zine Latifah /
Grace Barber-Plentie [and six others]
A zine about Queen Latifah made by contributors.

Zine-making
Anonymous (date unknown)
How to make zines and why
Melanie Maddison (2010)
Taking cultural production into our own hands

Playlist
Decolonising the Arts Curriculum Playlist,
Spotify profile: LCC Library Special Collection
A zine catalogue accompanying the Decolonising the Arts Curriculum: Perspectives on Higher Education exhibition, LCC, 4–31st October 2018 by Jessica Anoche, Ruth Collingwood, Pascale Jordan, Monica-carmela Sajeva. All images © LCC Library