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The full conference program can be found at this link: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforPublicHistory/Tellingstories/Programme/Fileupload,1430331,en.pdf>

Demonstrating a history of creative labor among the enslaved in 18th and 19th century America: a radical reimagining through the use of creative non-fiction and archival records in curating a museum exhibit on early American pottery production by enslaved laborers.

This study traces the creation of a museum show depicting the life of a fictional enslaved potter utilising both historical information from archive sources and historical artefacts attributed to enslaved craftsmen.

Due to gaps in the historical record, it is hard to reconstruct the life experiences of a specific enslaved potter. Nevertheless, by utilising multiple sources, we can reconstruct an imagined existence from the existing historical records.

I utilise business data of early American pottery factory owners who also enslaved persons as well as newspaper advertisements seeking fugitive enslaved people with specialised pottery/ceramic production abilities. I also utilise records of factory conditions in 18th- and 19th-century pottery production centres, such as Stoke-on-Trent, because many early American pottery factory owners and managers hailed from this region of England, bringing with them management practises and expectations regarding the creative labour of their employees. Finally, I use my knowledge of pottery manufacturing and items, including early American factory-produced pottery and Colonoware sherds and pots, to reconstruct the life of the person who created these objects.

By telling this story in a museum setting, I demonstrate how a visual narrative may bring to light a portion of American history that might otherwise be forgotten.

To develop a museum exhibition on a fictional African American enslaved potter

from the colonial era, I would first study a variety of primary and secondary sources to collect information about the potter's life, work, and surroundings.

Examples of possible sources:

Archived documents, such as census records, deeds, wills, and court papers, which can reveal information on the potter's family, community, and legal status as a slave.

Using archival documents, such as census records, deeds, wills, and court documents, you can learn about the working circumstances and lifestyle of an enslaved potter by following a number of procedures. Here are some suggestions:

Identify relevant archives and repositories: Begin by determining the sites where relevant papers are likely to be located. This could include state and local archives, libraries, historical organisations, and other institutions that hold collections pertaining to the time and place where the potter lived and worked.

After identifying appropriate archives and repositories, you will need to conduct a search for the documents of interest and then gain access to them. This may require utilising online catalogues or databases as well as contacting the archives directly to request access to certain holdings.

Documents to be analysed: Once you have gained access to the pertinent papers, you will need to carefully examine them to extract the pertinent information. Depending on your research objectives, this may include document transcription, the creation of summaries or highlights, or a more in-depth study.

Consider the context: When analysing documents, it is essential to take into account the context in which they were generated. This may include the historical, social, and cultural background of the time, as well as the prejudices or opinions of the individuals who authored the records.

By following these procedures, you will be able to review archival records that disclose valuable information about the working conditions and way of life of an enslaved potter and obtain a deeper knowledge of their circumstances.

Oral histories from ancestors or contemporary witnesses that provide valuable insights into the potter's experiences and viewpoints.

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1938, is a

great resource for comprehending the daily experience of enslaved labourers, such as potters. Here are some ways you might utilise this material to provide context for the experiences of enslaved potters:

Search for pertinent narratives: Born in Slavery comprises more than 2,300 oral history interviews with former slaves, many of whom worked in a range of occupations, including pottery. You can identify narratives that include pottery or potters by using the search tool on the Library of Congress website, which maintains the collection.

Read and evaluate the accounts: After locating pertinent narratives, you can read and evaluate them to acquire insight into the experiences of enslaved potters. Depending on your research objectives, this may entail transcribing the tales, providing summaries or highlights, or doing a deeper analysis.

Think about the situation: As you read and examine the narratives, it is essential to keep in mind the circumstances in which they were written. The Federal Writers' Project was a New Deal initiative that employed writers and researchers to document the experiences of former slaves. The interviews were conducted in the late 1930s, more than 70 years after the end of the Civil War. This historical backdrop as well as the particular biases or viewpoints of the interviewers may influence the interviewees' perspectives and experiences.

By utilising Born in Slavery to contextualise the lived experience of enslaved potters, you can obtain significant insights into the abilities, problems, and contributions of these individuals and develop a deeper understanding of the larger social and historical environment in which they lived and worked.

Historical descriptions of the time, such as books, articles, and internet resources, can provide context for the broader social, economic, and cultural milieu in which the potter lived and worked. To contextualise the labour of production potters during the colonial period, you may also explore studying factory records from places such as Stoke-on-Trent, England. These records can provide vital insights into the nature of pottery manufacturing during this time period, including the working conditions of potters, the technologies they employed, and the economic and cultural influences that moulded the industry.

To utilise these types of sources successfully, you may need to consider the following considerations:

The credibility and reliability of the sources: It is essential to carefully analyse the credibility and trustworthiness of the sources you utilise, as well as the biases or opinions of the writers or makers.

Pertinentness of the sources: Consider whether the sources are pertinent to your research question or topic. While some sources may provide significant background information, others may be more pertinent to the potter's own experiences and setting.

The constraints on the sources: Consider how the limits of your sources may shape or affect your interpretation of the potter's experiences. For instance, factory records may not contain specific information regarding the experiences of particular potters, or they may be influenced by the viewpoint of the factory owner or manager.

By carefully examining and contextualising these types of sources, you can acquire a more nuanced and thorough knowledge of the experiences and context of colonial-era production potters.

On the basis of this study, I would then construct a theme for the exhibition that emphasises the humanization of slaves' creative activity. This may involve promoting the potter's abilities and artistry, as well as their contributions to the community and society at large. To make the exhibition family-friendly and engaging, I might incorporate a variety of exhibitions including:

- Demonstrations of pottery-making techniques utilising replicas of the potter's tools and processes.
- Interactive exhibits that educate visitors about the potter's life and work, as well as the greater social and historical context in which they existed.
- Audio and visual resources, including as short videos and podcasts, that provide supplementary information on the potter and their work.
- Educational tools, including as fact sheets and interactive quizzes, that provide knowledge about the potter and the larger context of servitude during the colonial era.

The purpose of the exhibition would be to convey a nuanced and empathetic understanding of the potter's life and work, as well as to recognise their contributions to art, history, and culture.