

Nonetheless, whilst the community have undertaken the responsibility of maintaining and framing their history and heritage through the arts in the UK, we must acknowledge that their endeavours have not been without tremendous adversities. These include institutional and community racial discrimination and marginalisation, barriers to access funding, anti-Blackness and social inequalities. The discrimination within heritage and arts institutions have shifted the responsibility on artists and historians from ethnic communities to document and preserve their heritage often in less traditional forms outside of the central institutions. Although, as members and contributors to British society, all ethnic histories deserve comparable and unbiased representation by the arts and heritage organisations in Britain. There needs to be a greater effort on the part of national art, film and heritage institutes and funders, to understand and address the complex needs of each community. Direct action is required that will challenge inequalities evidenced throughout this report in order to bring with them formative changes. However, until this is achieved, the community will continue in its creative endeavours to preserve and document their history and heritage for future generations.



SADIYA AHMED
*Founder/Director
Everyday Muslim Heritage
and Archive Initiative*

Sadiya Ahmed is Director and Founder of the Everyday Muslim Heritage and Archive Initiative first established in 2013. She has been instrumental in fundraising, project planning and managing heritage and archive projects on the subject of British Muslim history and heritage. She has also initiated and brokered collaborations and partnerships with museums and archives, academics, artists, media professionals and community groups across Britain.

She also established the Khizra Foundation in 2010 as a community group to tackle the lack of representation of the Muslim community across the heritage sector. Subsequently, the Everyday Muslim Heritage and Archive Initiative was established as an umbrella project that has formally begun to archive Muslim life in the UK.

‘HER STORY’

BY LATIFAT OBANIGBA

There are only 2,000 artworks in the UK's permanent art collection, which are by Black artists (Larbi, 2020). This number is very low when considering that the UK's permanent collection is made up of millions of art pieces and objects. Most of the paintings and portraits hanging on the walls of British galleries were created by white men and feature prominent white figures in British and European history. Artists of African descent are absent from historical art collections in some of the world's largest museums, galleries and major auctions (Bishara, 2019).

The art world can be quite isolating for Black female artists and there is a stigma against artists that are self-taught. I think this stems from those that have studied and dedicated their life to art now competing with new and emerging artists.

I am Latifat, an IT Project Manager by profession and a self-taught visual artist. I have always loved art from a very young age but due to my upbringing and culture I was always deterred and influenced to focus on my academics. My parents, being first generation Nigerians in the UK, believed the only route to success was to study hard to become a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer. They did not perceive any form of art as a respectable or sustainable career to pursue. I think today art within African culture is now increasingly being given the credit and honour it deserves.

I have found inspiration for my art from my daily life as a Black woman in western society growing and adapting to an ever changing and challenging world. Some examples of artists that have inspired me are Damola Ayegbayo, Mellissa Falconer and Toyin Odutola. I love their use of colours and expression in their paintings which I felt I could identify with. Toyin's work for me tells a story of Black ancient history and a journey into her imagination of what power dynamics and women having ultimate power would look like.

My art represents the different stages of life from childhood to motherhood and aims to provoke emotions around being a Black Muslim woman in modern society. My paintings are a fusion of African culture, Muslim religion and British upbringing, all incorporating the challenges faced along the journey of life.

I created a virtual art exhibition for Black History Month entitled 'Her Story' to elevate, motivate and appreciate the richness of my heritage, religion, upbringing and culture. Each piece was created to provide a sense of empowerment, self-love, representation, community and culture. Each piece focuses on celebrating and paying tribute to Black women breaking barriers and creating history, telling their story of strength, resilience and growth. I felt this year more than ever was important to educate and promote a positive image of the Black community, especially women during such a prominent month.

As a Black artist I have identified with the underrepresentation of people of Black artists in the art industry. My aim is to raise awareness around invisible and silenced topics that affect Black women. An example is creating awareness and understanding of why Black women are 5 times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than women of any other race according to MBRRACE-UK (2018) - a study that looks into maternal mortality of Black women in Britain. Every piece I have created has a story and is dedicated to all Black women that are motivating and inspiring others to be their best and strive for positivity.



LATIFAT OBANIGBA
Visual Artist

Latifat Obanigba is a British-Nigerian self taught freelance visual artist living in London. She creates art using multiple different mediums. Her art aims to elevate, motivate and appreciate the richness of her heritage, religion, upbringing and culture enabling her to showcase the beauty of life through her love of art. Her work is dedicated to the beauty and strength of Black women as she believes Allah makes no mistakes and we are all uniquely and beautifully made.