

Business Archive Council Cataloguing Grant - Iniva Archive Final Report 2020

Summary

Iniva was awarded a £4,000 BAC Cataloguing Grant in 2018. The grant allowed us to begin cataloguing Iniva's Archives based in the Stuart Hall Library, London.

The archival collection documents Iniva's 26 year history as a pioneering organisation set up to diversify the mainstream of contemporary art. It comprises the organisation's foundational documents, including key mission, strategy and policy; correspondence with key stakeholders, funders and artists, as well as exhibition and publication files demonstrating years of campaigning for better representation of Black and Asian artist in British art institutions. As the only collection of its kind in the UK, the historical and cultural importance of making Iniva's archive more publicly accessible was vital for requests received from a wide range of audiences including international researchers and students of contemporary art. But also anyone interested in the past and present social and political issues in the study of BAME artists in Britain.

The grant was awarded to make the contents of the archives accessible for future artists, curators and the general public to research the rich history on contemporary art on artists of African and Asian descent. During the life of the grant Iniva moved locations from Shoreditch, London to a street facing location on the site of UAL Chelsea in Westminster, where the Stuart Hall Library would finally have a dedicated archive space. Between 2019 and 2020 an archivist worked closely with the Stuart Hall Library Manager in Iniva's new home to successfully create a full listing of the archive collections, now available [here](#). Iniva's archive project was made of three key elements: Records Management Review, Sorting and Archival Arrangement and Cataloguing and Re-packaging.

Records Management Review

This review included identifying and separating archival material identified in a 2011 survey in the Stuart Hall Library, which began the process of analysing the contents of the archive at box level only. The library team began a new listing and assigned and implemented retention actions to retention schedules developed earlier. The library and staff team completed all aspects of the Records Management Review ahead of schedule in September 2018 before Iniva's move to our new premises.

Sorting and Archival Arrangement

Following the Records Management Review the library team, with assistance from a group of library volunteers, also identified main record groups in the archival material. This included: Governance, Administration, Fundraising, Projects, Education, Publishing, Communications & Marketing, Press & Public Relations, Library & Archive, Finance, Human Resources and Building & Estates.

Whilst our new space on John Islip Street underwent major refurbishment works the archive collection was sent and stored in a specialist offsite storage facility with minimal access. Refurbishment works, which included the installation of rolling stacks within Iniva's archive space, and bespoke research furniture and fixtures, took longer than anticipated so the exciting work for the British Archives Council Cataloguing Grant was necessarily paused until 2019.

Additional funding activities

In the pause for our move, Iniva continued fundraising for the ambitious project of not only cataloguing but also digitising and making the archive space practical for public access in the future. We were awarded £25,000 from Cockayne Grants for the Arts in May 2019, secured with thanks for BAC seed funding for the cataloguing project.

In Spring 2019 the Library and Archive Manager with support from a library volunteer with archive management experience, were able to proceed with identifying records series within groups. They started the sorting and repacking phase with archival grade packaging in June to August 2019. BAC and Cockayne Grants from the Arts funding supported the refurbishment of the new archival room with bespoke mobile shelving to house the archival material appropriately onsite, archival cabinets for the audio-visual material in the collection and buy a dedicated online archive management system. This made it possible for the full return of the archive collection onsite in September 2019 and allowed us utilise the BAC grant to appoint an archivist in October 2019 to appropriately catalogue the collection on the new software as outlined in our application to BAC.

Cataloguing and Re-Packaging

The Project Archivist, Layla Fedyk was appointed in December 2019 for four months (December 2019-March 2020). Layla successfully devised a reference code scheme, drafted a classification structure for both archival records and current operations, and updated schedules respective to each function of Iniva's organisation. Layla also completed a new survey of the collection and writing fonds, record groups and series descriptions and listing the physical archive collection to either box, file or item level in a catalogue in Excel spreadsheet format in March 2020. This catalogue is now ready for migration into the new archive management system however, it was unfortunately delayed by the closure of the organisation due to global pandemic of COVID-19. Therefore, the spreadsheet has been made accessible via our website as an interim solution.

Outcomes and the future

Since the re-opening of our library to the public in Spring 2019 and the new accessibility of the archive collection, we have seen an increase in research into our archival material from artists and curators. We have created library specific programming around newly listed material, for example Iniva hosted a talk about the artist Frank Bowling and ephemeral material related to him in the collection in March 2020. In November 2020, new research outputs from exhibitions such as Veil found in the archive will be highlighted at an upcoming British Art Network Seminar. Library staff are now more informed and trained in records

management through our newly implemented retention schedule, and the archives are the most up to date to fulfil Iniva’s mission statement.

With BAC’s vital contribution to the appointment of a qualified archivist in our team, we have been able to realise the future resource potential of the archive for outreach and audience engagement. This project has laid the ground-work to use an archive management system, and will be continued in the development of future fundraising efforts in 2021 to digitise parts of the archive collection. This will focus on audio visual material of talks, events, symposiums and exhibitions.

Process photography

		
<p>1. Relocation to John Islip Street</p>	<p>2. New rolling stacks and archival collection delivered from offsite storage</p>	<p>3. Sorting and re-packing to box level</p>
		
<p>4. Sorting to folder and file level of exhibition records</p>	<p>5. Artist Frank Bowling archive file with new preservation material</p>	<p>6. Veil exhibition archive on display in talk</p>