

## Beyond the Binary Teacher Pack

### Key Questions Before Students Visit the Exhibition

What do you think the *Beyond the Binary: Gender, Sexuality* exhibition will be about? What might be in the exhibition? (it's okay not to be sure!)

What does LGBTQIA+ mean – do you know what each letter stands for? (again, it's okay not to be sure!)

Have you every seen LGBTQIA+ objects or stories in a museum before? If not, why? If yes, where did you see them?

If the word 'binary' means 'two things' (when something is divided into two groups, one or the other, i.e. male or female) what do you think 'Beyond the Binary' means – what is 'non-binary'?

On a Post-It, write down a sentence or even a word that expresses how you feel about looking at the exhibition. What do you expect to see or hear? Look back on this after you have visited and see if you were right!

*Beyond the Binary* Teacher Notes and Questions About the Exhibition:



**'Octopus' bag (Canada, North America) Métis community, made mid 1800s**

Dan Laurin, Métis artist and *Beyond the Binary* community curator, reflects on his gender identity and cultural heritage.

“This bag combines European needlework techniques with Indigenous artistry to create a highly symbolic piece that melds together two extremely different worlds into one unique identity. Referred to as an ‘Octopus’ bag because

of the eight cloth tabs, these bags would have held flint, tobacco, and ammunition for hunting. The creator of this bag was aware of their dual identity as a Métis person and made sure to highlight the differing components of their heritage in their work.

The name S. Black refers to the Scottish fur trader Samuel Black for whom the bag was made, probably by one of his Métis wives or daughters. Note the European motifs such as the heart and non-native tulips incorporated with Indigenous designs including prairie roses, beaded edges, and florals positioned in the sacred four directions representing the four stages of life including stems, leaves, buds, and blooms.” Dan Laurin (Métis artist and *Beyond the Binary* community curator)

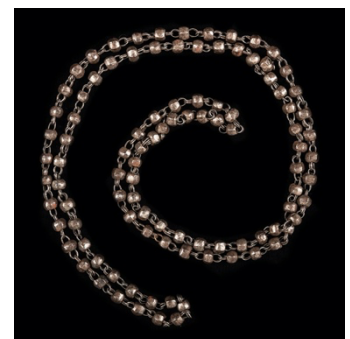
Métis is a French word meaning ‘mixed’ which is now used as the name for a recognised group of Indigenous Peoples who once had mixed European and Native American heritage.

- Why do you think is it important to Dan for him to spot the European and Indigenous aspects to the design?
- Why might the heart symbol be important to Dan or any of us?
- What might the four stages of life for plants connect to in a human lifetime? Why is this important?
- Dan Laurin’s identity as a trans man informed his design for a new version of this bag that incorporates LGBTQIA+ colours and symbols. What might these changes look like? Why are they important to him?



“The objects and images shown here represent aspects of Catherine Hilda Duleep Singh’s identity. Catherine was a Sikh princess and suffragette, born in the nineteenth century. She had a relationship with her governess, Lina Schäfer. They lived in domestic harmony in Cassel, Germany, after Catherine completed her education at Somerville College in Oxford.”

*Shakira Morar (Beyond the Binary community curator)*



## THE PRINCESS AND THE GOVERNESS

Poem by Shakira Morar (*Beyond the Binary community curator*)

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Daughter of the Maharaja, born in Elveden Hall,  
The Princess arrives: Catherine Hilda Duleep Singh.  
She's under the eye of Queen Victoria, before she can crawl, She's  
moved to London with her sisters, away from the king. The Oliphants  
look after the girls, and then Lina arrives.  
She wears a pleated skirt, a shirt with puffed sleeves  
When she smiles, she carries the skies in her eyes.  
They talk over many days and many eves,  
They build a connection through conversations, and cups of tea. The  
German governess and the Indian princess,  
Bonds growing deep like the roots of a banyan tree.  
Lina's name is sketched in Catherine's index.  
Catherine comes out as a debutante at the Queen's ball,  
She dances, draped in silk, in Buckingham Palace hall.

Catherine studied at Oxford, Somerville College,  
Where she sung in the halls, played violin and swum.  
She engaged in hobbies, languages, a spectrum of knowledge.  
She learnt women couldn't own income, their voices were unsung. By  
joining Fawcett Women's Suffrage Group,  
She refused to take any militant action,  
She refused to use her fists, ignite a political coup.  
She campaigned for women, helped the movement gain traction. The  
next century rolled around and Catherine toured India.  
She met a myriad of people from locals to royals,  
Those from Punjab, Kashmir and Amritsar.  
She returned to England, saw it was laden with spoils.  
Then Lina arrives, they move to Cassel, a German town,  
With fountains, lakes and roses decorating the grounds.

Whilst Lina cooked, Catherine grew flowers: this was their world. They  
walked through the Black Forest and braised quaint shops, Enjoyed the  
sounds of trickling water and watched petals unfurl. But the world was  
at war, soldiers had their guns cocked. Catherine stood out in Cassel: she  
was a black sheep,

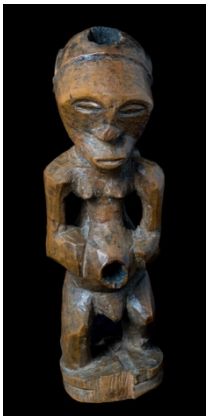
but Lina vouched for her, tried to open up minds,  
whilst minefields killed soldiers, tore them from sleep.  
The couple visited Lina's family, they continued to unwind. But Hitler  
gained power and Lina's health suffered. Catherine moved between  
England and Germany,

between her family and her lover:

Catherine was the supporter and infirmary.

In their lifetime, the couple shared a bank account (Swiss), they shared a home, a heart, and a life of domestic bliss.

- Why might Lina and Catherine's relationship have faced criticism when it began to develop in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- When did gay marriage become legal in the UK?
- What is a suffrage or a suffragette?
- How might touring India and returning to the kingdom that was stolen from her father by the British have changed Catherine's views about Queen Victoria?



Intersex variations are not related to sexuality or to gender identity. They are physical variations in our sex characteristics that we can be born with. These can include variations in our chromosomes and hormones, as well as our internal or external genitalia. It is not rare. People with intersex variations comprise 1.7% of the populations. In the UK, that is over 1.1 million.

Wooden figures, one previously described as an 'hermaphrodite' carving (Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa)

"It was a very moving experience for me to see these wooden carvings of figures depicting intersex variations. The text uses the term 'hermaphrodite', which is derogatory. Rather than describing the objects themselves, this clearly describes the attitudes of the time regarding physical sex variations. However, by inviting me to view and consider these carvings, the museum is embarking on a journey which hopefully will begin to breathe life into new perspectives and narratives on intersex." *Valentino Vecchiotti, Intersex activist*

What do you know about intersex human rights abuses in the UK and internationally?

How can you find out what these abuses might be?

How could you raise awareness about non-consensual medical interventions during infancy and childhood?

What would you say if someone you knew told you they had intersex variations?

Why is important to celebrate individuality and not conformity?

### **Key Questions for Students after visiting the Exhibition**

Which object is your favourite? Why? Is it about the way it looks? Is it the story behind the object?

How many people do you think worked on the exhibition? What did they all do? What identities did they have? What age ranges?

What did you learn in the exhibition?

Which part of the exhibition did you like best (displays, freestanding objects, interactive section, videos)?

Was there anything in the exhibition that connects to your identity or the identity of someone close to you?

Has visiting the exhibition made you ask questions? If so, what are they?