

Background

Jessica Elleray is an archaeologist and research artist based on the border of Cumbria and Lancashire. Her work is inspired by heritage narratives, especially those that have been obscured over time or through human activity. She has a particular interest in the looting and trafficking of antiquities and cultural property, as well as local, overlooked heritage. Jessica works in painting, sculpture and installation, playing with texture and chemical reactions to create evocative work, as well as engaging with communities and interest groups.

Jessica received her BA Hons in Fine Art and Creative Writing from Lancaster University in 2017 and her Masters in Collecting and Provenance at the University of Glasgow. She featured on BBC's Countryfile with Siobhan Miles-Moore for their collaborative project Copper (in our) Veins. The project responded to recent conversation work undertaken on Coniston's Copper Mine sites and included an exhibition, heritage sculpture trail and workshop program. The sculptural way-markers told the stories of those who lived and worked there, whilst bringing back to the valley that tell-tale copper gleam that first drew miners to the landscape in the 16th century.

Before COVID-19, Jess started the Museum of Stolen Stories, a long-term research project exploring the impact of looting, trafficking and collecting antiquities and cultural property. The project utilises object biography, provenance research and replica theory to bring hidden narratives to light and open meaningful discussion about our shared human heritage. 2020/21 has seen Jess spend less time in the studio and more in the field, working as an archaeologist for Oxford Archaeology, finding inspiration for the project and others.