

# Teaching Research Project

## Abstract

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Amidst the opening of two recent exhibitions (Jeffrey Gibson's *When Fire Is Applied to Stone It Cracks* and *African Arts - Global Conversations*), the year 2020 is a time when provenance is very visible at the Brooklyn Museum. Whether it's through the provenance labels in *Global Conversations* or the exploration into Culin's archival materials in Jeffrey Gibson's exhibition, artists and curators have exposed the Brooklyn Museum's collecting practices, illuminating that colonization is residual and ongoing. Further, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be increasingly important for institutions to lean into their permanent collections and use internal resources. This gives staff the opportunity to explore visitor inquiries about provenance and to address these inquiries with care. Through explorations of audience questions and interests, cross-departmental staff dialogue, and insight from other institutions, I argue that educators and public-facing staff must intentionally create space for audiences to think critically about the institution and institutional structures. Drawing on Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I consider ways that the museum can hand over authority to its audience by posing questions and facilitating transparent conversations about the colonial contexts of objects on view. Further, I present a teaching tool entitled "An Incomplete Guide to Provenance and Colonial Contexts at the Brooklyn Museum," which uses key terms, historical background, frequently asked questions, points of inquiry, collection case studies, and personal reflection to inform educators and public-facing staff about ways to engage audiences around this topic.