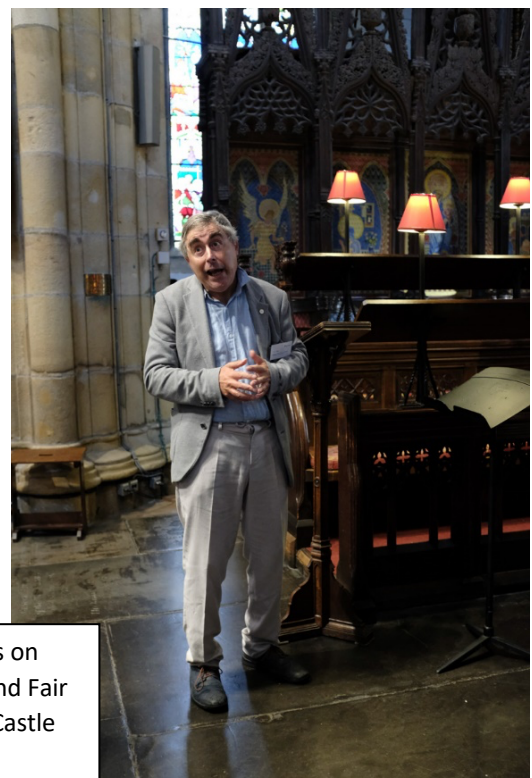
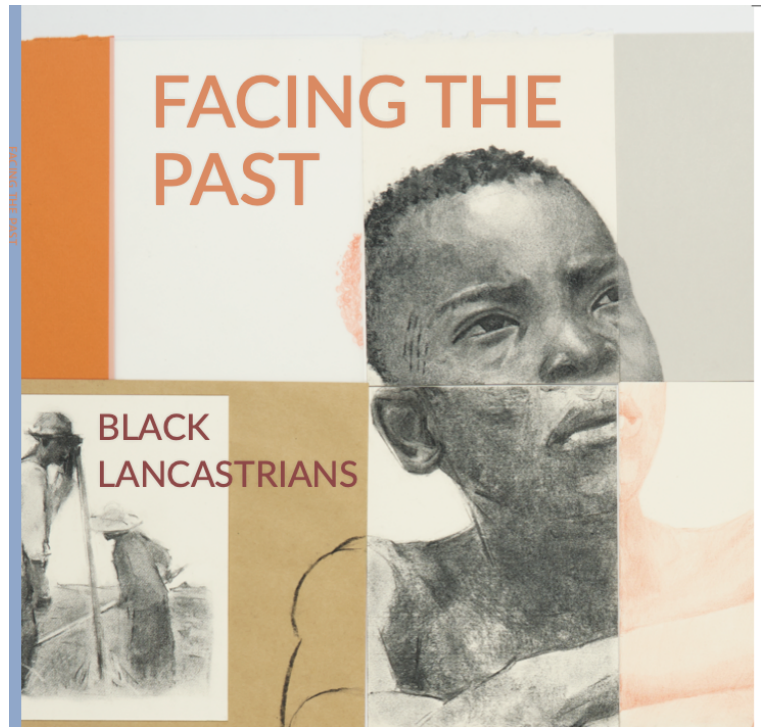


**Exhibition catalogue *Facing the Past: Black Lancastrians* launched on 18 July at the Judges' Lodgings Museum**

Thank you to everyone who participated in our [Facing the Past](#) symposium and launch of the exhibition catalogue at the [Judges' Lodgings Museum](#) on 18 July. The exhibition, which opened in March and runs until November, features new commissioned portraits of six Black Lancastrians by Kendal-based artist Lela Harris, which are informed by historical research including family stories, church and other public records.

Following a welcome by Professor Alan Rice, director of UCLan's Research Centre for Migration, Diaspora and Exile (MIDEX), and Judges' Lodgings Museum Manager Lynda Jackson, the participants went on a tour of

Lancaster sites related to the transatlantic slave trade, led by Alan, which finished at the Borough pub in Dalton Square. While everyone enjoyed lunch, 500 beautiful copies of the catalogue, entitled *Facing the Past: Black Lancastrians*, were being delivered to the museum in perfect time for the launch, thanks to Norwich-based printing company [Page Bros.](#)



Professor Alan Rice speaks at two sites on the Lancaster Slave Trade, Abolition and Fair Trade Trail: the grounds of Lancaster Castle and in Lancaster Priory Church



Dr Nicole Willson gives a talk on artistic depictions of Haitian women revolutionaries

In the afternoon, Alan chaired a panel of five papers, beginning with a talk by UCLan researcher Dr Nicole Willson on artistic depictions of Haitian women revolutionaries from her research project "[Fanm Rebèl: Recovering the Histories of Haiti's Women Revolutionaries.](#)" Barbara Chiron, project coordinator at the French association [Les Anneaux de la Mémoire](#) ('The Rings of Memory'), spoke about her work with the community in Nantes and with Prof Rice on [MANIFEST](#). Then, UCLan PhD student Kirsty Roberts gave a presentation on her research entitled 'The Importance of Visible Black Social History in Museums and Galleries: Revealing overlooked legacies of the Lancaster Slave Trade and Morecambe's Black Entertainers'.

This was followed by Nikita Gill, from the [Manchester Art Gallery](#), giving a reading of her essay 'Fingerprints in the House Museum', which appears in the catalogue. Finally, Jess Sache, who works for SMARTIFY and Facing the Past, talked about the project's [Digital Archive](#).

Lela then gave a tour of her six portraits and took part in a Q&A panel alongside French artist [Elisa Moris Vaj](#),

whose catalogue essay discusses the connections between *Facing the Past* and her innovative exhibition *National Narrative*.



Nikita Gill reads from her catalogue essay 'Fingerprints in the House Museum'





Lela Harris speaks about her portrait of Thomas Anson during her tour of exhibits



Lela Harris and Elisa Moris Vai answer questions during the artists' panel session

Lastly, a wine reception was provided by Lynda's team at the Judges' Lodgings, and Alan gave a speech congratulating all those whose work appears in the catalogue, including Lela, Elisa, Nikita, and Jess, as well as Professor Imogen Tyler and Dr Sunita Abraham, both of Lancaster University; schoolteacher Geraldine Onek of Lancaster Black History Group; Edinburgh University student Jasmine Patel; and Scarborough-based artist [Dr Jade de Montserrat](#), who is a MIDEX visiting fellow. He also thanked UCLan publishing graduate Amy Rice, who typeset and designed the catalogue, and his co-editor Jenny Webster, a research associate at UCLan.

Lela said: 'I would like to send a big, heartfelt thanks for everyone's contributions to the catalogue and symposium event on Tuesday. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and feel super lucky to have been able to work with such a great team on this project. The catalogue looks amazing and I've already had lots of interest online about people wanting to [buy copies!](#)'

Alan added: 'I have had universal praise for the day and for the publication. Special thanks go to Lancaster Black History Group in recognition of their support for the research that underpinned this catalogue and the whole [Facing the Past](#) project. Lela's pictures in the centre of the catalogue are the core of the project. Thanks so much for the gift of them for all of us working on the project and recognising Black Lancastrians.'

Copies of the catalogue are now available to buy at the Judges' Lodgings Museum for £10 each. All proceeds go to the museum and to Lancaster Black History Group.

The Facing the Past exhibition was made possible by grants from the Art Fund, the Association of Independent Museums and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the exhibition catalogue and launch event were funded by MIDEX, with UCLan's Institute for Black Atlantic Research (IBAR) promoting the mission to recover Black Atlantic history and champion Black Atlantic art.

*Report prepared by Jenny Webster and Raphael Hoermann, with further images courtesy of Lynda Jackson, 26 July 2023*

UCLan Research Centre  
for Migration, Diaspora  
and Exile (MIDEX)



**INSTITUTE FOR BLACK  
ATLANTIC RESEARCH**



Art Fund\_