

# *Phantasmagoria*

## Audio guide

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### **Stop 13.**

Hi, my name is Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley. I'm an artist and archivist that mainly makes work in which the audience is the main medium. This often means creating video game or interactive pieces that require the audience to interact with it before anything happens in this space.

I'm going to be showing *PIRATING BLACKNESS*, also known as *BLACKTRANSSEA.COM*. It's a work that will look like a kind of medium-sized fishing boat, which has been cut in half. It will have a controller box with four buttons and most of the work is in a lo-fi, black-and-white or muted colour palette with highlights of red. And it looks as if it was inspired by 3D graphics in the 1990s.

This work is mainly about the history of slavery and analysing your position within it. So what happens is when you go and play the game, you have an option between picking, if your family history is one that carried people across the oceans or one that were carried across the oceans, and depending on that, you will get a ship and you will be able to go on a kind of adventure with your ship, which is all determined by your family history. Survivability of your ship determines if your family history carried people across the oceans or not. Thus your experience will be completely bespoke depending on who you are.

So I had this friend who's also an artist called Eburn Sodipo. And I asked her for a picture of her eye. And I started modelling a ship because I wanted to do something about the water. And she was doing stuff about the water at the time. And I was thinking along the lines of if water had a memory, what would it say? And so I wrote this story about the wounds of the ocean, and the ocean having these wounds that remembered everything that happened across them and stored anyone that drowned within them.

And this story slowly started morphing into this game, which I started modelling off my friend's eye. So I modelled the ship. Then I modelled the ocean off their eye. I modelled the sand. At the time also, I was looking at these online games called ARGs or alternative reality games, which basically are a big mystery that you try and unfold. And so in that I kind of made my own mystery in this game where it opens up saying there's a file in your computer, it allows you to travel back in time to go through your ancestors' history of the ocean.

When I think about folklore or my interpretation of folklore, it's more about, archiving the way in which people did think and the way in which they want to pass information on. And so for me, story is something that I always start with. And when I write stories for my work, they're always based on a grounding bit of reality, whether that's the research I've done or whether that's an actual conversation with someone.

And so what the stories are attempting to do is just archive that small bit of research or that small conversation, and blow it out into a larger experience that you can kind of sit within. And that also can hold the people coming to the work, which I think is what kind of folklores do.

I think folklores have a small moral or reason they exist. And they grow over time so that more people can tell them, can be, remember them and also can place themselves within them. So

for me, it's about widening the context of my research or those that I want to archive so that other people's kind of history and ways of thinking affect it. And they feel responsible for the kind of story being told in front of them.

For me, the most important thing is that each work is kind of a mirror to yourself. And a look into yourself hopefully. So the choices that you make through it are the piece rather than what you see. It's actually the choices that you make through it and the feelings that you have that you leave with often. I'm hoping you leave with an 'I' statement rather than this work was amazing.

I don't actually care about that, I don't care if you think it's beautiful. I don't care if you or at least that's not my aim. I don't want you to leave thinking the work is beautiful. I don't want you to leave thinking the work is an awe-inspiring work. I want you to leave with an emotional feeling and with an 'I' statement. So for me, the best way to experience it is through your own choices, feeling responsible for what you're seeing and then reflecting on what you did.

This is the end of Stop 13.

This is a transcript of an audio guide produced by Henry Moore Institute for the exhibition *Phantasmagoria*, on display from 15 May to 30 August 2026. For more information visit [henry-moore.org/phantasmagoria](https://henry-moore.org/phantasmagoria)