AHRA Statement
Race and its Entanglements

The Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA) was founded in 2003 to ‘increase the recognition, capacity, support and success of humanities research in architecture in the UK’ to the ‘mutual benefit of all researchers working in this long under-valued area’. The core mission of the organisation is to promote, develop and disseminate architectural humanities research. This includes ‘encouraging the development of younger researchers and fostering the exploration of new and emerging areas of humanities research in architecture’; ‘raising public awareness of the social, cultural, economic and political value of research in architectural history, theory, culture, design and urbanism’; and ‘providing access to a body of knowledge and informed opinion to statutory bodies and the academic community, as well as the wider public and the media’.

Since its foundation, AHRA has continued to lobby institutional bodies such as HEFCE/RAE, AHRC, ESRC, CABE, RIBA and SCOSA, to ensure representation and recognition of the architectural humanities. As part of that work, AHRA has made demands and lobbied for equal representation and recognition of women in the field – with tangible results in the composition, for example, of the assessment panel of the latest REF2021. Such could only be achieved through the work of Steering Group members who worked so hard to transform representation within AHRA itself.

In 2020 Black Lives Matter successfully mobilised actions across the United States of America and internationally, in the wake of the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, heightening public awareness of the ongoing struggle for recognition - and ultimately transformation of - racialised inequalities, exploitation, subordination, and violence. Founded in 2013 Black Lives Matter is only one of a myriad of anti-racist, social justice, anti-, de, and post-colonial, anti-imperialist, civil rights and internationalist movements, insisting on a recognition of systemic racism and its location at the heart of institutions of policing, governance, public discourse, and knowledge. As a result, many HEIs, learned societies, professional bodies, heritage and custodial institutions, local and international statutory bodies and NGOs in areas related to the built environment and beyond have responded with varying degrees of understanding and effectivity, to redress lack of representation; economic and professional marginalisation and exploitation; and institutional, tacit, latent and structural racism. Historically engaged with critical questions around societal equity, we believe that the architectural humanities – and AHRA – can and needs to play a vital role in mobilising a transformative shift around the question of racial justice.
As an organisation founded on the principles of ‘inclusivity’ and ‘comprehensive support’, AHRA commits to the following:

· To recognise and redress the lack of representation of Black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) researchers in our Advisory Board; Steering Group; and Advisory Boards and Editorial Teams for the Architecture and Culture journal and Critiques book series.

· To lobby key institutions that frame and underwrite access and support for architectural humanities research, so that the work of BIPOC researchers of all ages and at all levels is recognised, valued, and sought.

· To foster and disseminate – through AHRA supported conferences, symposia, and publications – new research in the architectural humanities that: addresses systemic racism and colonialism in the production, reproduction and mediation of the built environment; that rigorously contends with the inherited epistemological, practical, ethical and aesthetic criteria in which architectural humanities research is produced; or that values, reconstructs, sustains or posits pre-, anti-, de-, post-colonial ways of practicing architectural humanities.

· To raise public awareness of systemic racism, and the histories and continuing legacies of colonialism and imperialism, including their newer forms and manifestations, that set the terms of reference in current debates about the quality of the built environment, and to promote new counter-terms of reference.

· To encourage and support intersectional modes of architectural humanities research and collective initiatives that explore the entanglements of these issues and approaches with those involving other lines of marginalisations and discrimination, including but not limited to gender, class, sexual orientation/identity and disability.