

# **Sensing the Materiality of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: An Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Approach**

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Is there a material signature for slavery and colonialism? Is there a place where you can see, perceive, and touch how the Global North became rich, leaving the Global South in a state of dependency? The West African coast, with its European forts and castles that were involved in the transatlantic slave trade (15th–19th century), is one such place. In this talk, I present the initial findings of a recent collaborative project at Fort William in Ghana, a pivotal site in the British slave trade. Tens of thousands of enslaved individuals passed through its gates on their way to the Americas. The project takes an interdisciplinary approach to Fort William, integrating material culture studies, digital archaeology, historical research, community-based methods, and multi-sensory ethnographic techniques. By foregrounding the material, phenomenological, and sensory dimensions of slavery and colonialism, this research reconceptualises Fort William and other European forts not merely as logistical nodes of imperial commerce and violence, but as enduring architectures of exploitation that continue to shape social, spatial, and political realities in postcolonial contexts. This novel approach promises to fill a significant gap in Atlantic slavery studies and contribute new insights to debates on colonial heritage.