

SUMMARY

I am requesting research support to travel to and access archives in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Washington D.C., Minnesota, the USVI, and Denmark. This archival research will help me complete my manuscript and submit a book proposal to a university press.

BACKGROUND

Between Here and There: Visualizing the Afterlives of Danish and U.S. Empire examines how art, visual culture, and material objects shape and contest the entangled legacies of Danish colonialism and U.S. imperialism. By tracing objects, images, performances, and monuments across Denmark and the continental United States, the book argues that empire persists not only through governance and policy but through visual economies that produce selective histories, racialized imaginaries, and competing claims to sovereignty and belonging. I introduce the concept of *trans-imperial nostalgia* to describe how Danish colonial memory and U.S. imperial imagination circulate together—mutually reinforcing mythologies of freedom, innocence, and national destiny while producing contemporary material consequences for communities historically marginalized by these imperial legacies.

This book will be published in 2027, during the 110th anniversary of Transfer Day—when Denmark sold the Virgin Islands to the United States. Formerly known as the Danish West Indies, the islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix were colonized by the Danish West India-Guinea Company as early as 1672. Sugar plantations using enslaved Africans were the main economic activity until revolts led to the abolition of enslavement in 1848. In 1915, during World War I, the United States and Denmark discussed the acquisition of the three islands, which led to their official purchase for \$25 million in 1917. Since then, the United States dynamically retained the remnants of a plantation economy through repackaged visual forms whose detachments from the history of enslavement allow its symbolic violence to remain intact and openly consumed in the present.

This will be the first book to critically analyze the entangled relationship among the United States, Denmark, and the USVI. It is also the first book that uses art and visual culture to discuss this relationship and the imperial legacies existing within the USVI. As a result, this project uniquely contributes to the field of Art History, Black Studies, and Caribbean Studies, while building on recent scholarship in US Imperial History and Danish Colonial History.¹

SPECIFIC AIMS AND EXPECTED APPROACHES AND RESULTS

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH: *Between Here and There* is divided into 5 Chapters that critically triangulate the complex relationship among Denmark, the United States, and the USVI through narratives of visual and material culture [Appendix 1]. To complete this project, extensive archival research must be conducted across these three spaces. I began this location-specific archival research as a Fulbright Fellow in 2016 and have continued independently through the present. Additionally, I was awarded a Scholar-in-Residence at Penn State University for Spring 2026, which includes access to their digital research databases and faculty research support

¹ Akobo, A. 2023, Danbolt, M. 2025

network. Between May 2026 and August 2026, I plan to visit the following locations (the success of the project will be measured by successfully visiting the below archives):

- **Pennsylvania** Historic Society, Philadelphia; National Archives, Philadelphia; Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
- **Washington DC** National Archives and Records
- **Connecticut** University of Connecticut Archives, Storrs
- **Minnesota** 1776 Markoe Rum Company, St. Paul
- **USVI** St. Croix Landmarks Society, St. Croix; USVI Archives, St. Thomas
- **Denmark** Royal Library, Copenhagen; Labor Museum, Holbæk Museum

BOOK PROPOSAL SUBMISSION: This archival research will allow me to finalize my research and continue writing my manuscript towards completion. The final product/ measured outcome of this research is an official book proposal, accompanied by a complete chapter, ready for submission to university presses in the Fall of 2026. I am currently in conversation with the University of Florida Press and the University of Virginia Press [Appendix 2]. I have an official meeting with the University of Illinois Press in the Fall 2026 at the ASALH Conference. I also plan to submit to the University of Washington, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, Yale University, Duke University, and the University of Manchester Presses.

CAMPUS DESEMINATION AND BENEFIT: Lincoln Mission includes providing a rigorous Liberal arts education. Additionally, the Strategic Plan highlights the importance of High-Impact Pedagogies, including writing-intensive courses, contributing to student success. My teaching philosophy includes integrating my research projects and publications into the curriculum, enabling students to access and analyze cutting-edge research in Art History. I will also present my research at Lincoln's faculty research symposium 2026/2027. As a result, the students and faculty benefit by having access to cutting-edge research, while the University benefits from increased institutional reputation and prestige.

TIMELINE

May - June 2026: Travel to Danish Archives and writing.

June – July 2026: Travel to the USVI and the Continental United States Archives and writing.

July – August 2026: Complete Travel to the United States Archives and continue writing.

August – September 2026: Complete Book Proposal and submit to university presses.

MEASURED OUTCOMES

The measured outcome will be a complete book proposal that will include one complete book chapter to be submitted to multiple university presses.