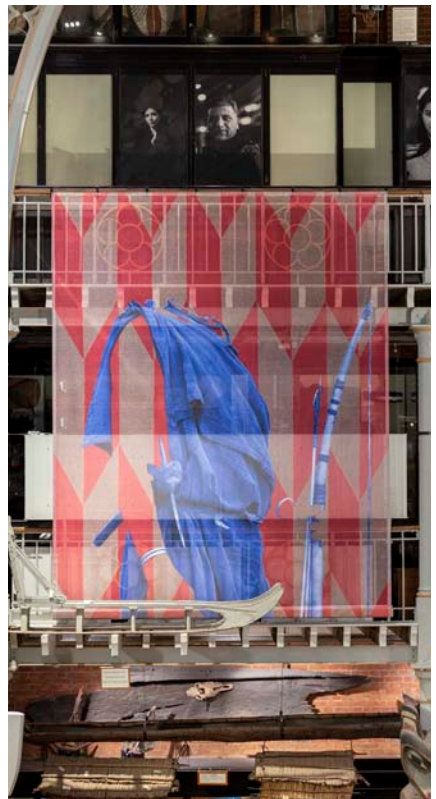


Losing Venus

Losing Venus, consisting of multiple installations by artist Matt Smith, highlights the colonial impact on LGBTQ+ lives across the British Empire and seeks to make queer lives physically manifest within the Museum. From 1860 onwards, the British Empire criminalized male-to-male relations, imposing lengthy prison sentences and the legacy of these legal codes lives on. Of the 72 countries in the world with anti-gay laws, 38 of them were once subject to British colonial rule. As a response to these colonialist gender laws, *Losing Venus* seeks to place contemporary discrimination, which is still affecting the lives of many around the world, at the heart of one of the cultural centres of the country which exported it, examining their impact through the lens of sexual identity and gender fluidity.

The name *Losing Venus* is a reference to the idea of love and gender, but also references the purpose of Captain Cook's first voyage – to measure the transit of the planet Venus. The installation comprises four main parts located on the Lower Gallery (1st floor); *Recording the Invisible*, *Creating the Unbelievable*, *Commemorating the Unknowable* and *Signposting the Future*.

The Pitt Rivers Museum is committed to being a space in which difficult histories can be reflected on, acknowledged and the legacy of colonialism in the present, including in the museum space, disrupted. This includes acknowledging the impact of colonialism on 'queer' lives across the globe.



Matt Smith was born in 1971 in Cambridgeshire. His artistic practice involves unpicking the work of establishment organisations and shifting their – and their visitors’ – points of reference.

His ground-breaking exhibitions in the past decade include *Queering the Museum* at Birmingham Museum (2010) *Other Stories* at Leeds University Art Collection (2012) *Flux: Parian Unpacked* at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge in 2018 and *A 31 Note LoveSong* at the V&A (2016) and *Gustavsberg Konsthall*, Stockholm (2019). He has also been closely involved, in collaboration with the University of Leicester, in the National Trust *Prejudice and Pride* project.

Matt was Artist in Residence at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2016. He has won numerous awards including the Maylis Grand Young Masters Prize for ceramics (2014) and *Object of the Show* at *Collect* at the Saatchi Gallery (2018). His work is held in many museum collections including the V&A, the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Walker Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and Brighton Museum and Art Gallery. He has a PhD from the University of Brighton and is Professor of Ceramics and Glass at Konstfack University, Stockholm and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Leicester.

Losing Venus is a series of interventions by artist Matt Smith exploring the impact of British colonialism on LGBTQ+ lives [#LosingVenus](#).



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