Pitt Rivers Museum

Reimagining Digital Connections

Digital Care, Critical Change, Radical Hope

Strategic Priorities

To continue to engage with our audiences we are re-inventing the Pitt Rivers Museum, curating more of our content online and delivering hybrid activities. This included adapting our key priorities, as we worked to:

Reach and inspire audiences with innovative and imaginative programming

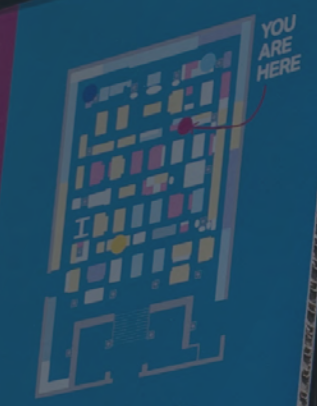**Activate collections through cutting edge research and access**

Bring research to life

Improve digital care and access to all

Extend our reach through partnerships

Contents

Introduction
Digital Care, Critical Change, Radical Hope

The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) has been investing in building a more robust and resilient digital infrastructure to enable the discovery and preservation of digital assets as well as improve global and local accessibility to them. This has been key to our vision to empower digital connections with the Museum, reaching more people and activating collections. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this has proven of even greater importance, with many people seeking out museum content online for a variety of purposes. Since the spring of 2020, we have drawn on our digital resources to help transform nearly all our ways of working, teaching, research, reaching out and connecting with our audiences.

Digital Presence

Our digital investments have allowed us to maintain a strong digital presence through lockdowns, from online collections to social media engagement. Our **virtual tour came top in many 'Best of' lists, with the PRM seen as one of the most engaging places to visit virtually**. We have been pleased to see that the PRM's digital presence throughout lockdown proved not only rich in content but also encouraged people to feel a sense of togetherness and hope. ArtNews called PRM lecturer-curator Dan Hicks' **#Museumsunlocked** "the best thing in the generally grim world of Twitter during the pandemic".

Website and social media use showed a significant overall rise of interest in our online content (**162%** compared with the previous year). Despite a slight decline in the number of users of our usual website pages (during the Museum's closure), there was an overall increase in engagement with our website content with a **spike in interest of nearly 400% in our 'micro-sites'** and **100% growth** in interest in our blogs and social media content.

Adapting to Life Online

We have also adapted to increased online connections through our exhibitions and events. Online engagement via our new series of virtual conferences and seminars has been well received, with positive reviews coming in from our local and global audiences.

Our expanding webinars series ***Radical Hope, Critical Change*** (co-funded by The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities) has attracted new and wider audiences and has helped to raise awareness about the curatorial work the PRM was doing even during its closure. There have been rave reviews of the webinars, with its programming described as **"stunning and pertinent"**. The webinar chats are equally lively, allowing colleagues from the sector to **exchange ideas and even start new collaborations**.

Reaching New Audiences

PRM press-coverage in over 450 media outlets worldwide showed much global interest in the Museum. Meltwater Media Monitoring, a dashboard tool that analyses brand performance across global media channels and measures potential reach and customer sentiment to help assess our online reach, showed that the news about critical changes made to the PRM's iconic displays, had a potential reach of **6.86 billion people globally, with 97% positive or neutral customer sentiment**, while the *Critical Change* programme was reviewed as **"brilliant and gutsy"** by online audiences.

Exhibiting Online

Exhibitions that would previously have been visited by our audiences in person were highlighted on our social media, to enable those who had not been able to visit to still enjoy their content online. While we had to postpone the introduction of new on-site digital interactive exhibits because of social distancing, **we launched two online 'digital-born' co-curated exhibitions**, and **archived 55 exhibitions digitally**, to make the content available online. The digital-born exhibits invited us to experiment with developing our co-curatorial practice in a virtual-space. Connecting digitally enabled both the empowering of individuals engaging with the Museum to share their perspectives, as well being empowering through the topics and themes covered.

One exhibit, *Photography and Women*, was co-curated by PRM staff and affiliated researchers, with seventeen contributors working mostly from home, **making use of the Museum's online database**, where 65% of the collection has been made digitally available. The Museum is working to make even more available in the next three years.

The second, called *Weaving Connections: Local perspectives on collections from the Middle East, North and West Africa* brought together volunteers, researchers and staff to co-curate a multi-layered set of voices, enabling visitors to explore interpretations of collections via the online content tool Genially. An outcome of the *Multaka-Oxford* project, developed in collaboration with Oxford's History of Science Museum, project collaborators researched content for online audiences. These projects also demonstrate how other parts of our community engagement work went online, resulting in **new methodologies for the collaborative curation of exhibitions with digital volunteers and researchers**.

Online Learning

Throughout the pandemic, PRM staff members have participated in online webinars and teaching across the globe. **Primary and secondary school teaching and further education sessions were successfully offered as hybrid-online teaching** with positive feedback. Live online school delivery was designed as both a replacement for our existing popular on-site sessions and a format to test some sessions in our new 'decolonial schools' offering. Each session was bespoke and grew out of consultation with teachers and in response to demand, with these new ways of working feeding in to the in-progress redesign of our online education pages.

Higher education collaborative learning and research access switched to providing hybrid access, with many being facilitated virtually.

Hybrid Future-Proofing

Before lockdown, **contactless donations** were rolled out across GLAM, with the PRM attracting a relatively good share of revenue per user. As a response to lockdown, we developed our small **online shop**. To enable safe opening we set up a **new ticket system** providing access with reduced capacity, and that also provides visitors with the **facility to donate online**.

Despite the challenges faced by the PRM during lockdown, **we have continued and continue to care for our collections and to engage with an increasingly wide range of people**, sharing content and ideas about our collections as well as helping develop new best practice for ethnographic museums in dialogue with our critical friends.

Digital Presence Through Lockdowns

Virtual Museum
nominated as 'the best 360° UK museum tour you can take at home'

6.86 billion
potential reach in people globally - Meltwater Media Monitoring

~400% growth
in visits to our 'micro-sites'

100% growth
in views of our blogs and social media content

#museumsunlocked
"the best thing in the generally grim world of Twitter during the pandemic".

144
online conferences, webinars and events with Museum staff

Radical Hope, Critical Change

6
gallery interventions installed during first lockdown with linked digital content

75
countries recorded as locations where people watched *Radical Hope* webinars online

764K+
collections records cleaned in our CMS DAMS project

Beyond the Binary
new co-curated exhibition and object trail installed in second lockdown, and online events programme

Adapting to Life Online

55
past exhibitions archived and made available digitally

34
collaborators in two digital-born co-curated exhibits

online learning
Hybrid teaching sessions for primary and secondary schools, and further education

online donations
a new ticketing system for online events and booking visits with option to donate

The Digital Landscape at a Glance
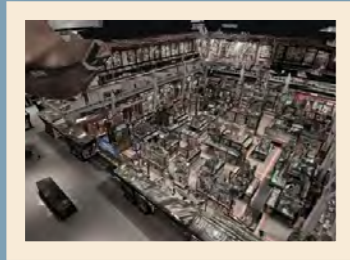
Virtual Museum
nominated as 'the best 360° UK museum tour you can take at home'.
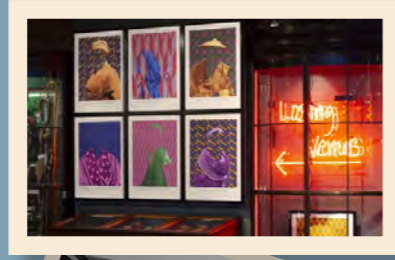
Online exhibitions
Four of our recent onsite exhibitions are made available digitally.

Virtual teaching
This year, the research, curatorial and public engagement staff participated in over 90 online-conferences, dialogues, debates and webinars worldwide.
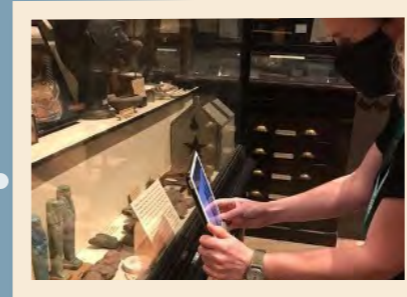
Labelling Matters
Sep 2020: A new introductory case and a series of display interventions using QR codes highlighted problematic case labels.

Spring 2020 (1st Lockdown)

CMS/DAMS
Part of a £1.9m IT Development Fund, this project will make a transformational change to the way Oxford museums manage their collections. Over 750,000 records cleaned and 44,000 new records created, with work ongoing.

Microsites
The Thesiger microsite in particular proves very popular, attracting 497,764 views during 2020.

Autumn 2020 (Reopened in September)

Radical Hope, Critical Change
This programme of online digital events reimagines what the future might be for museums that have deep roots in coloniality.

Digital-born exhibitions
'*Weaving Connections: Local Perspectives on Collections from the Middle East, North and West Africa*' opened on 12 January using the interactive app Genially.

Spring 2021

The Caretakers
Podcast: Head of Operations, John Simmons offered the public a rare glimpse into the life of UK museum security and maintenance staff who continued to look after buildings and collections during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

New Collecting
Researcher Marenka Thompson-Odlum granted the Art Fund New Collecting Awards to collect and commission contemporary work from Haida, Ainu, Hawaiian and Edo artists and makers.

Winter 2020 (2nd Lockdown)
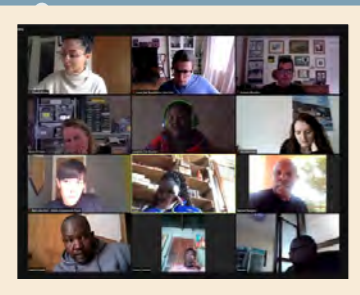
Maasai Living Cultures Project
Continuation of research through online workshops between colleagues based in the UK, Kenya, and Tanzania working to co-curate educational resources celebrating Maasai cultural heritage.
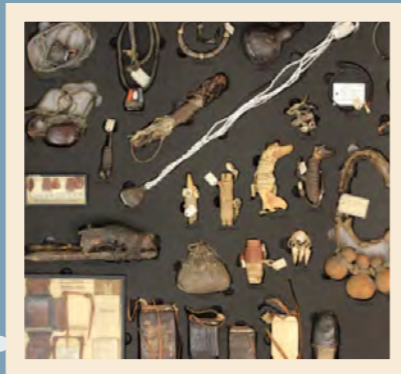
What's in Our Drawers?
A conservation project to redisplay the contents of museum storage drawers to make them accessible to the public, reaches milestone of 150, with updates shared online in anticipation of reopening.

Taking Care series of events
Focusing on 'Museum Futures in Times of Planetary Precarity' international speakers discussed the role of world culture museums as places for caring about Climate Change in an event series that ran from 8 April to 20 May 2021.
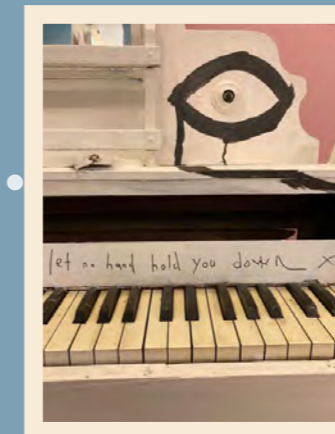
Summer 2021

Beyond the Binary
Programme of online events to complement the co-curated physical exhibition exploring Gender, Sexuality and Power.

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Inspiring Audiences

Virtual Museum

The Museum's virtual presence received much positive attention, including being nominated as 'the best 360° UK museum tour you can take at home' by Museum Crush, the respected online museum magazine from Culture 24, placing us well ahead of the National Gallery, Tate, British Museum, and indeed everyone else. In order to bring the virtual tour up to date with the new displays and interventions, we will be investing in building new content to create even more engaging virtual presences of the Museum for our audiences. New funding secured in 2021 from the very competitive Digital Innovation grant (UKRI, AHRC and the Museums Association) will allow us to adapt our successful and popular virtual Museum tour by adding interactive content with young people, indigenous curators, artists, and activists and an innovative tool that allows users to break down how coloniality works in displays.

> ❝ *That is the coolest virtual tour ever!* ❞
> Review on Neatorama

The current virtual tour captures the Museum a couple of years ago, meaning online visitors get to experience photographic portraits by Nyema Droma, displayed hanging from the ceiling in a temporary installation in the Museum (see picture opposite) as part of a larger exhibition.

Through continuing to develop our digital virtual tours, updating them with current displays, we will be able to reach a global audience to share work on decolonisation in the sector, and help extend our reach to secondary school children and their teachers beyond Oxfordshire, who have asked us for content about colonial histories and their legacies. As well as focusing on information, the tour will put the Museum into the hands of its audience and help to increase the sharing of multiple, often silenced voices.
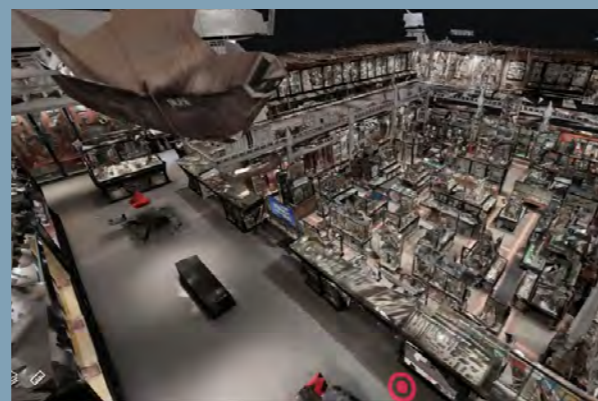
Views of the virtual tour of Pitt Rivers Museum

> ❝ *It makes for a surprisingly rich adventure – and just like a real visit, you'll probably want to come back and explore this virtual museum again and again* ❞
>
> Museum Crush,
> 'Britain's best 360 degree virtual museum visits'

> ❝ *Wandering through the maze of glass cabinets and unusual artefacts is a particular highlight* ❞
>
> Art Fund,
> 'Our favourite virtual tours'

Exhibitions Online

Temporary exhibitions that would have been visited by our audiences onsite, were highlighted on our social media, to enable and encourage those who had not been able to visit to view their content online. *Losing Venus*, a much-anticipated exhibition by Matt Smith installed just before the first lockdown, was also made available digitally and the accompanying catalogue went on sale in our online shop.

Promoting current exhibitions online, that were physically inaccessible during lockdown, also enabled a global audience to engage with content created with international collaborators including: *Memoirs in my Suitcase*, co-curated with ALART, Diaspora Turk and Dr Emre Eren Korkmaz; *Blow-up in Bissau* co-curated with Dr Ramon Sarro and Ana Temudo, with Dr Albano Mendes, Director of the National Ethnographic Museum of Guinea-Bissau; and *Traces of the Past: Reflections on the 1996 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda,* co-curated by Dr Julia Viebach with survivors from the UK Rwandan community. All viewing figures shown here are from April 2020 to April 2021 (or from when the exhibition launched in that period), with recorded views, average dwell times and number of countries and regions recorded as locations from which the site was accessed.

From April 2020 to April 2021, the online pages created of past exhibitions at the Museum received **3,746 pageviews**. The four most popular were:

Burial of Emperor Haile Selassie
2,562 views

Surveying the Nagas
1,090 views

Thesiger in Africa
948 views

Last Samurai
919 views

Losing Venus
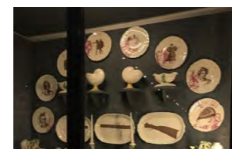
👁 **1259** views
⏱ **3:42** min
🌍 **50** countries

Memoirs in my Suitcase

👁 **1087** views
⏱ **3:33** min
🌍 **58** countries

Traces of the Past

👁 **604** views
⏱ **2:00** min
🌍 **44** countries

Blow-Up in Bissau

👁 **426** views
⏱ **2:22** min
🌍 **38** countries

> *Dear Museum, thank you for appreciating and preserving history as it should be. Without you our past would be forgotten. It is so vital to not only commemorate our history but to learn and grow from it."*

Feedback from *Traces of the Past* exhibition.

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Digital-born Exhibitions

Our digital programme has also included the development of the first digital-born on-line exhibitions, *Photography and Women* and *Weaving Connections: Local Perspectives on Collections from the Middle East, North and West Africa*. The latter exhibit was opened on 12 January 2021 and has been received very positively. The focus of the project has been to enhance the Jenny Balfour-Paul collection of textiles, objects and photographs from the Arab world with multi-layered, personal, emotional and factual layers of story-telling and engagement to deepen understanding and facilitate cross-cultural learning and understanding. The exhibit was developed collaboratively with *Multaka-Oxford* online researchers and volunteers who as refugees or forced migrants are newly settling in Oxford. The rave reviews, average dwell time on both exhibitions, and the range of countries visitors come from, are extremely encouraging. All viewing figures shown here are from April 2020 to April 2021 (or from when the exhibition launched during this period), with recorded views, average dwell times and number of countries and regions recorded as locations from which the site was accessed.

Photography and Women

👁 **1279** views

⌚ **3:19** min

🌐 **65** countries

As part of the Photo Oxford Festival 2020, the Pitt Rivers Museum's staff and associate researchers took a fresh look at their huge collection of around 300,000 historic and contemporary photographs, and picked out one that for them resonated strongly with the festival's theme, *Women and Photography: Ways of Seeing and Being Seen*. Although working mostly from home, **contributors made use of the Museum's online database, where 65% of the collection is available in digital form online.** Hosted on the PRM's website, *Photography and Women* highlights photographs taken by female archaeologists and anthropologists, as well as photographs of women.

Palestinian women (named as Rashidi, Amui Haj, Yusra) working at archaeological excavation, Wady el Mughara, Israel, 1932. Photo by Dorothy Garrod, chosen by Dr Ashley Coutu. PRM 1998.294.52.

Weaving Connections

👁 **2428** views

⌚ **4:47** min

🌐 **62** countries

Weaving Connections online exhibition used the interactive app Genially to bring together the voices of community co-curators with collections from the Jenny Balfour-Paul archive. The digital format allowed for multiple navigation routes as well as layering different types of interpretation into the experience using pop-up windows activated by interactive buttons on collection items.

Poetry and drawings by volunteers were included alongside videos showing waterwheels in motion and action-shot images of dyeing techniques, with the digital format allowing this provision of richness in understanding and creative engagement.

Images of objects featured in *Weaving Connections;* ceramic tortoise from Tunisia; woman's *korta* (dress) from Yemen
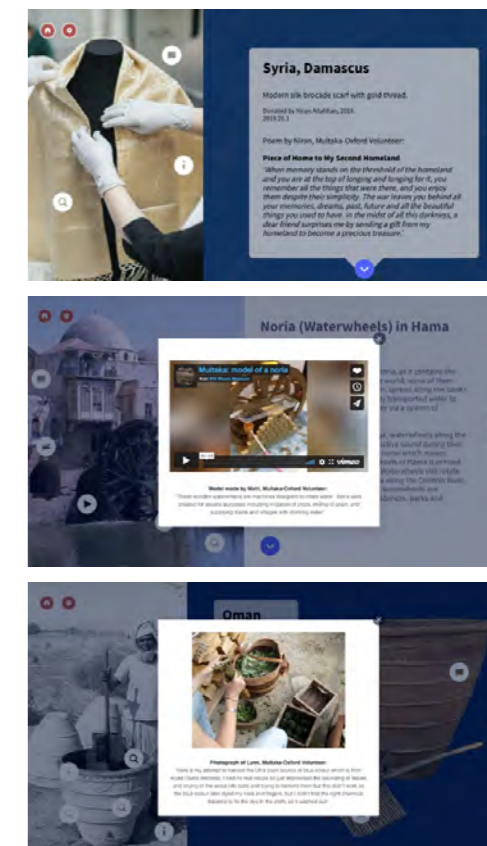
It is a refreshing, welcoming and innovative exhibition, and proof that personal perspectives on artefacts can only improve the stories we tell.

A.Duch Gimenez

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Main Website

The Museum's current website was launched in December 2018, alongside a rebrand of the Museum's logo with design agency One Ltd. The website was built using the University's own Mosaic platform rolled out across the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM). Mosaic is an image-led content management system with the focus on imagery allowing the PRM to easily share photography and video on the site which has been fundamental to allowing our sharing of online exhibition content during 2020. All viewing figures shown here are from April 2020 to April 2021 with recorded views, average dwell times and number of countries and regions recorded as locations from which the site was accessed.

558,267
views

208
countries & regions where people accessed the website

250,290
sessions

167,260
users

Microsites

In 2020, the PRM started a wholesale review and rebuild of some of the Museum's legacy 'microsites'. These project-specific websites were often built to ensure longevity and access to the results of research projects over the last 15 years. However, some of the sites have become unsuitable in the evolving digital landscape and require upgrades to their operating software. It is hoped that over the course of the next two years, many of these sites will be either rebuilt or incorporated into the Museum's main Mosaic website. This will ensure that researchers and visitors can continue to access the valuable information and resources they contain.

In 2020, some of our microsites have proved to be incredibly popular. Interest generated by the **Thesiger Collection accounted for a nearly 400% increase in 'sessions,'** with peaks in visits in May 2020 and January 2021, and noticeable interest from the Gulf states during 2020. We continue to ensure that much-loved legacy content continues to be available for audiences worldwide.

Opposite: View of a member of Wilfred Thesiger's travelling party looking out across the Wadi Sayfam towards Jebel Kawr. Oman, 1949. PRM 2004.130.22682.1

Thesiger Microsite

497,764
views

1:20 min
average session

10
countries & regions where people accessed the website:
Saudi Arabia, USA, UK, UAE, Oman, Kuwait, India, Australia, Canada, Germany.

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Social Media Engagement

The past few years have seen unprecedented levels of activity within the Museum in terms of reinterpreting and re-curating the displays, and setting up partnerships with local and international communities. We have also been developing new models for delivering public events and school programmes and ground-breaking projects and research marking out the Pitt Rivers as a sector leader. We are keen to share all of this activity with our audiences, so that they can understand and engage with what is happening in the Museum, and have actively engaged with the online community through our own sites and social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, especially sharing multimedia content.

+11.6%

+11.4% **+60%**

48 k

36 k

24 k

12 k

0

2019 2020   2019 2020   2019 2020
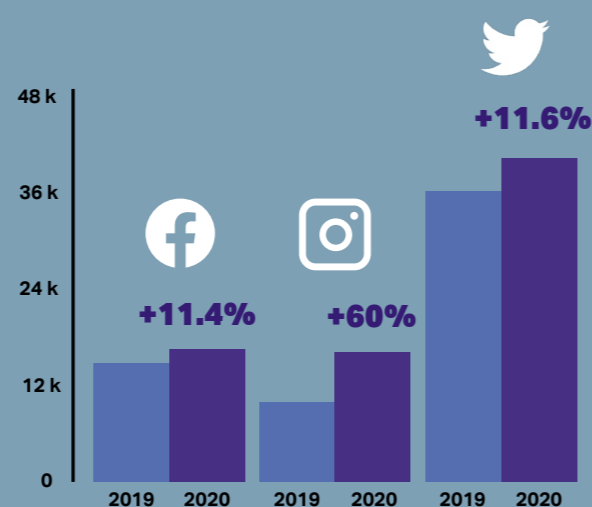
Graph showing social media audience numbers increase from 2019–2020

" *This is awesome! I love to see … the process of collecting. Usually museum visitors can only imagine the life of an object…but seeing the documentation of how that object got into a collection is really, really interesting* "

Response on FaceBook to posting a film about Sheila Paine.

Even with the doors closed for most of the year, the Museum maintained an impressively strong media presence, reaching a potential audience of **6.86 billion people**, **an increase of 68%** on the previous year. Despite the sudden lack of on-site visitors and events during lockdowns, we stayed connected with our audiences online via the website and social media. **Our followers on social media are steadily increasing** year on year with Facebook followers increasing from **14.9k to 16.6k** (+11.4%), Instagram rising from **10k to over 16k** (+60%), and Twitter numbers growing from **36.3k to 40.5k** (+11.6%).

Blogs and Podcasts

A growing range of collaborative podcasts and blogs have been developed by our team, alongside webinars and online conferences, with some reaching significant audiences from across the globe. Our **blogs drew a total of 80,415 readers**, with the most popular blogs drawing close to **500 readers each,** and recordings on our legacy Reel to Real project blog reaching **over 8,000 listens**. Podcast highlights include:

'Decolonising Museums: The Maasai & Oxford' podcast episode hosted online on CitizenReporter, as part of our *Maasai Living Cultures* project with NGO InsightShare. An additional podcast also highlighted the importance of representing women's roles and voices in museum decolonisation work.

Labelling Matters series of co-curated podcasts with Oxford secondary school pupils' readings and re-readings of labels and objects hosted on our SoundCloud account, as part of our ongoing *Labelling Matters* project. Together these have had **1,948 listens**, and have been listened to in **more than 40 different countries**.

The Caretakers podcast series, delivered by Eloise Moody, and supported by arts organisation Metal, offered the public a rare glimpse into the life of UK museum and gallery security staff while highlighting the often-overlooked contributions they make - as key workers - keeping the Museum's collections and buildings safe during national lockdowns.

Featuring six museums across the UK, each episode of *The Caretakers* centred on one object, chosen and narrated by a member of a security or maintenance team - a reimagined take on the traditional curator-led tour format. For the Pitt Rivers Museum, Head of Operations, John Simmons, who has worked at the Museum for over three decades, mused on how he came to work in the museum world, his early recollections of the Pitt Rivers and why a particular Ethiopian shield is his favourite object because it reminded him of his encounter with the explorer and writer, Wilfred Thesiger.

www.prm.ox.ac.uk/event/the-caretakers

80,415 readers
across all our blogs

32,000 readers
of our photography blog

~9,000 readers
of our objects blog

8,000+ listens
to recordings on our
Reel to Real **blog**

1,948 listens
to 8 *Labelling Matters*
podcasts on our
SoundCloud

"We are a living culture, not a dead one, and a museum should not be our mausoleum."

Samwel Nangiria,
Maasai Rural Human Rights Defender
2017, Tanzania

Activating Collections

Labelling Matters

When we reopened our doors to the public on 22 September 2020, we invited the public to engage with work on some of the Museum's more contentious displays completed during lockdown closures. These changes are part of a comprehensive programme of work to deeply engage with the Museum's colonial legacy. Overall, this is one of the most pioneering approaches to decolonisation at a museum in the UK. During 2017–2020 a comprehensive internal review of displays was done from an ethical and conservation perspective. Displays with problematic case labels using derogatory language, or reinforcing negative stereotypes, were identified as requiring urgent attention. In response, as a first 'intervention', additional information to displays has been installed to expand interpretation and invite open dialogue on these issues.

Gallery intervention adding additional information to the lamellaphone case.

A **new introductory case** offers insights into the way the Museum formed its collections and how it relates to its legacies today. This is adjacent to interpretation highlighting the important role women played in the formation of the collection, adding to wider understandings around the rich layers of history of the Museum and objects within.

Throughout the Museum we have installed **new thematic interpretation graphics** that invite more comprehensive readings and provide visitors with tools to analyse the displays. Corresponding films and podcasts, accessible through QR codes, bring the displays to life with more engaging, moving and multi-faceted stories with this additional webcontent expanding museum interpretation beyond exisitng labels.

Where the Shuar tsantsas were displayed, in a case called 'Treatment of Dead Enemies', we have installed graphics and text that explain in more detail how these **human remains** were brought into the Museum. The reasons for why they were taken off display are outlined as well as the Museum's current engagement with the 2800 human remains it stewards, and we have ensured all this information is also available online. **prm.ox.ac.uk/critical-changes**

Audience research continues to evaluate the way audiences are engaging with this new content online, in the press and on site.

❝ *I really admire how the Pitt Rivers Museum is embracing change and leading the way for museums to reconsider their collections for a modern context - bravo!* ❞

Feedback on social media

❝ *I am so glad the museum is changing to better reflect the communities it is teaching people about. A wonderful update hand in hand with those people around the world whose objects are held there. Excellent work.* ❞

Feedback on social media

❝ *We booked a family trip to Pitt Rivers when it was open in December - when changes underway... so inspired our 17 year old, it's become EPQ topic & [they are] now reading up. Museums make you think.* ❞

Feedback on social media

Maasai Living Cultures Project

Begun in 2017 when Samwel Nangiria visited the Museum in person, our *Maasai Living Cultures Project* with NGO InsightShare has continued to embrace digital ways of working in 2020 and 2021. Project members are engaged in ongoing work co-curating educational resources celebrating Maasai cultural heritage. Digital communication has been essential in supporting the continuation of research through online workshops between colleagues based in the UK, Kenya, and Tanzania. Collaborative working processes continue with several focus groups planned for development and feedback, all of which will take place via Zoom. In addition to video conferencing the team will be making use of film, specifically the formation of a series of participatory videos which will be used in formal teaching. Film is a highly versatile medium for expression and communication, especially using participatory video methods to assist our aim to develop culturally accurate and mindful sessions that forefront self-representation. Filmmakers have creative control from start to finish, generating films which articulate topics and stories that reflect first-hand experiences. These short films will encourage dialogue about Maasai identity, sustainable living, and the impact of climate change during the Museum's educational sessions.

Conversations are also ongoing about the way the Museum speaks about the Maasai in its displays and databases, as well as the future care of objects. Key to the future of the project is the development of relationships of trust between stakeholders and a continued openness with regards to the different possible avenues for redress.

Layering digital interpretations in the Museum

The new graphics installed in the Museum in the first lockdown use QR codes to take advantage of the potential for digital layering of polyvocal interpretations around objects on display. International artists and museum project collaborators feature in short video edits of interviews and artworks, bringing new voices and interpretations to the displays to activate collections with audiences. Maasai representative, Amos Karino Leuka, who is working on the *Living Cultures Project*, discusses the cultural importance of wooden fire-drills and fire-making, while Thabo Muleya, a *Multaka-Oxford* volunteer from Zimbabwe shares the long history of the *mbira* in Southern Africa, accompanied by clips of *mbira* player Miles Ncube. Two video pieces by international artists also expand critical ways of interpreting the Smoking and Stimulants case and history of the opium trade.
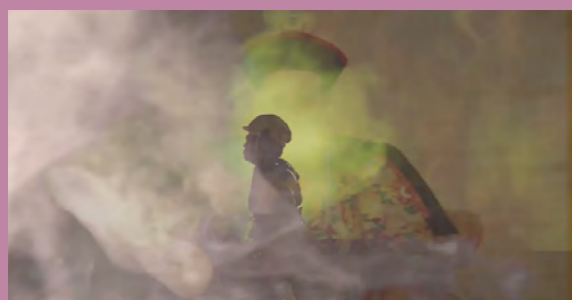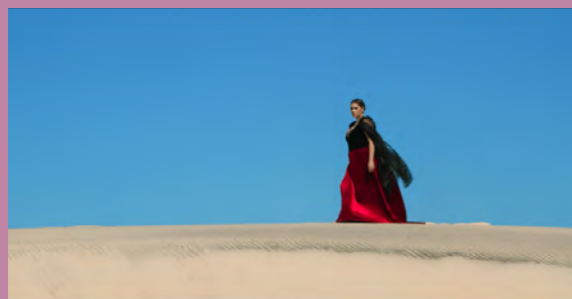
Detail from Fiona Foley's *Out of the Sea like a Cloud*
Detail from Royce Ng's *Empire of Opium*

Empire of Opium by Royce Ng, a Chinese-Australian artist currently based in Hong Kong, features edited fragments of his Opium Museum trilogy performance cycle that looks at the role of opium in the formation of the modern Asian state, The film, *Out of the Sea like a Cloud*, by Fiona Foley - a Badtjala woman, artist and an academic from K'gari (Fraser Island), Queensland, Australia draws on the oldest known Aboriginal song, which records the Badtjala sighting of Captain Cook and crew on the *Endeavour*, as it sailed past Takky Wooroo, K'gari/ Fraser Island in 1770. Foley brings Indigenous Knowledges to the fore in the film, building upon the surviving words of the Badtjala song handed down over generations, while also commenting on the colonial history of opium in the state of Queensland. The curation of these artworks by *Labelling Matters* researcher, Marenka Thompson-Odlum, also led to the *Art Fund New Collecting Project,* expanding this work.

Audio Guide Handsets

The Museum has launched a new audio guide to help visitors explore popular highlights of the collections with added interpretation while in the galleries. Covering all three floors of the Museum, they provide further information about how objects came to be in the collection. The handsets use contactless technology to provide access to new recordings about the Museum and the objects on display. We are pursuing opportunities to make the content available on people's own web-enabled devices, using the Museum's free Wi-Fi, as well as in a range of additional languages and to cover content beyond the highlights tour, incorporating themed trails alongside exhibition specific tours and narratives.

... is a space of cultural representation

In a museum representation matters; as you explore the Pitt Rivers think about the power dynamics and ask yourself four simple questions:

Who is being seen?
Who has the power to see?
Who is being represented?
Who represents?

Object in Focus

The story of the sculpture of colonial officer B.J.A. Matthews by a Yoruba artist illustrates the link between empire and the collecting of objects. Hear the history of this object by scanning the QR code on the label.

Uncover one story of colonial collecting.
Yoruba artist, Sculpture of colonial officer, Nigeria, 1930s
1991.12.1

Changing Perspectives
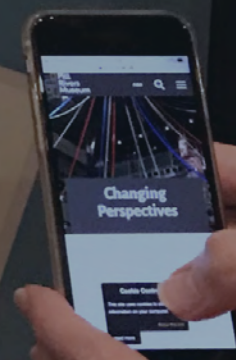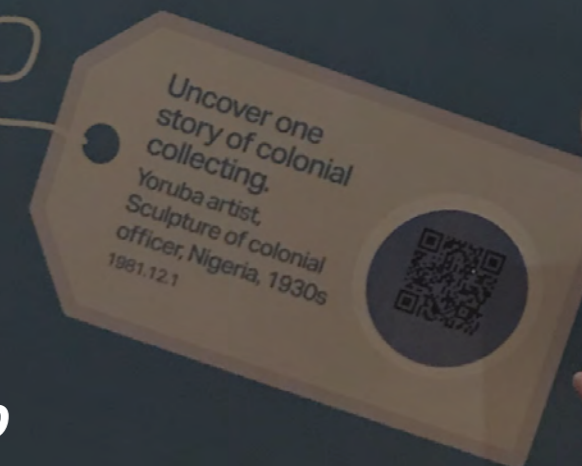
Fascinating. I have to admit that I had never thought of anthropology as integral to imperialism, but now I have read it it seems so obvious!

Feedback on social media

New Collecting Project

In 2020 the Pitt Rivers Museum was awarded a grant from the **Art Fund New Collecting Awards** with the aim of commissioning and collecting contemporary objects from artists and makers from four specific cultural groups: Haida, Ainu, Hawaiian and Edo. The newly acquired objects would act simultaneously as artefacts and new forms of interpretation by speaking directly to the existing collection.

The project attempts to decentre the Eurocentrism within the PRM, by collecting objects that explore self-determination and self-representation. Furthermore, the project seeks to create a more collaborative and equitable collecting practice; exploring the tensions between the new practices and existing policies and legalities, and how embedded institutional processes and structures hinder true collaborative and equitable work, specifically between the Museum and artists from historically under-represented communities.

To fulfil the better practice research element of the project, the project lead was meant to have travelled and met with the various artists, makers and communities. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that part of the project has had to be conducted all online, with frequent Zoom meetings set up between the project lead and artists. This has meant that all the relationship building that it takes to make a meaningful partnership has had to occur virtually, but it also means that much of the creative process can also be shared with online audiences.

For example, Solomon Enos' series of 16 paintings based on the *Tale of Hi'iaka* have been the first new artworks to arrive at the Museum. Prior to their arrival, Enos joined forces with the Museum to create an Instagram campaign showing the development of each painting and the unique narratives that he gave to each of the characters. Enos' use of Hawaiian objects within the PRM collection and Hawaiian terminology in his narratives appeared to have greatly appealed to Hawaiian audiences who commented on social media and also served to connect a new audience with the Museum.

The Entomology Department at the Bishop Museum in Hawai'i will be working with us to launch a social campaign exploring and bringing to life the endemic Hawaiian insect species featured in Enos' artwork. This campaign will highlight issues around environmental change and the fact that Hawai'i has a very large number of species that are extinct or endangered.

The conversations born out of these discussions have also led to the artists working with the PRM on other digital projects. For example, the Poakalani Quilters from Hawai'i were recently the guest speakers at the (virtual) *Taking Care Conference* hosted by the PRM. OKI, who is making an Ainu *tonkori* as part of the collecting project, will be performing and speaking about his musical craft as part of the *Radical Hope* webinar series. Furthermore, many of the artists and makers have also agreed to be knowledge exchange (KE) partners with the PRM for a KE podcast series on decolonising acquisitions policy and process.

solomonenos · Following
Honolulu, Hawaii

solomonenos "The Sacred Dancer", 16 of 16 Insect and Arachnid People of Subterranean Hawai'i, commissioned by the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England. 9x12", Acrylic on Bristol board, 2021. Endemic Hawaiian Insect: Hyles calida. Narrative: As it is the custom in the Hawaiian archipelago on the surface, so too is it in this subterranean realm far below, that the peoples of these parallel worlds give reverence and unconditional appreciation to their gods and lands in the form of the Hula (a sacred dance performance). This ceremonial art-form is significant for many reasons, and perhaps chief amongst them is the ability for these performers to become a fusion of their deities and their environment, expressed through the medium of their

357 likes
FEBRUARY 15

Solomon Enos, Instagram post showing the progression of Enos' *The Sacred Dancer* and the accompanying narrative, PRM, 2021

> "*cheers in joyous tiny bug noises* Sol!!! As a weevil lover and of course kapa maker, imma have to say she is my FAVE so far. Will there be prints of her and her fellow insect kinsmen available in the future?

Feedback on social media In response to Enos' The Kapa Maker

> 'Oh my God I got chicken skin this is really thrilling thank you for letting us participate!'

Feedback on social media

What's in Our Drawers?

Alongside activating collections through cutting edge research and online engagement, the PRM Conservation team have been busy laser cutting foam supports to provide greater care and access to items in the Museum's historic display drawers. Despite the challenges of the lockdowns, the team have redisplayed the contents of over **170 storage drawers in the Museum** increasing their accessibility to the public. The objects in the drawers were becoming damaged from overcrowding and existing poor storage, and were also hard to see. The project has been driven by the Museum's digital technology, requiring the preparation of digital cutting guides from images of the drawer layouts. Carefully curated compositions, maximising space and visibility, are then created by cutting and etching new bespoke conservation-grade foam storage for the selected objects using a laser cutter. Almost **4,000 bespoke object silhouettes** have been cut out, with documentation photography running alongside **resulting in the creation of digital images for over 4,500 objects.**

The team have shared their progress online with the wider community via their Instagram account, **@pittriversmuseumconservation**, regularly interacting with feedback from followers about the objects. They have also shared the project in **webinars,** hosted by the Museum, and with the **ICON Ethnography group** in November 2020.

The project has been funded by The Clothworkers' Company.

Photographs documenting the stages of rehousing one drawer with foam layouts created using the laser cutter depicted on the opposite page.

82 objects have received remedial conservation treatment

171 out of **270** drawers completed

3,917 individual foam cut outs have been laser cut

4,500 objects photographed

8,261 objects found in the drawers

> *I don't think it's possible to express how happy these beautifully laid out drawer inserts make me. So satisfying.*

> *Marvellous! It always seemed like the tip of the iceberg on display - and now we can see even more of it all!*

Comments on
PRM Conservation
Instagram account

Activate collections through
cutting edge research
and access
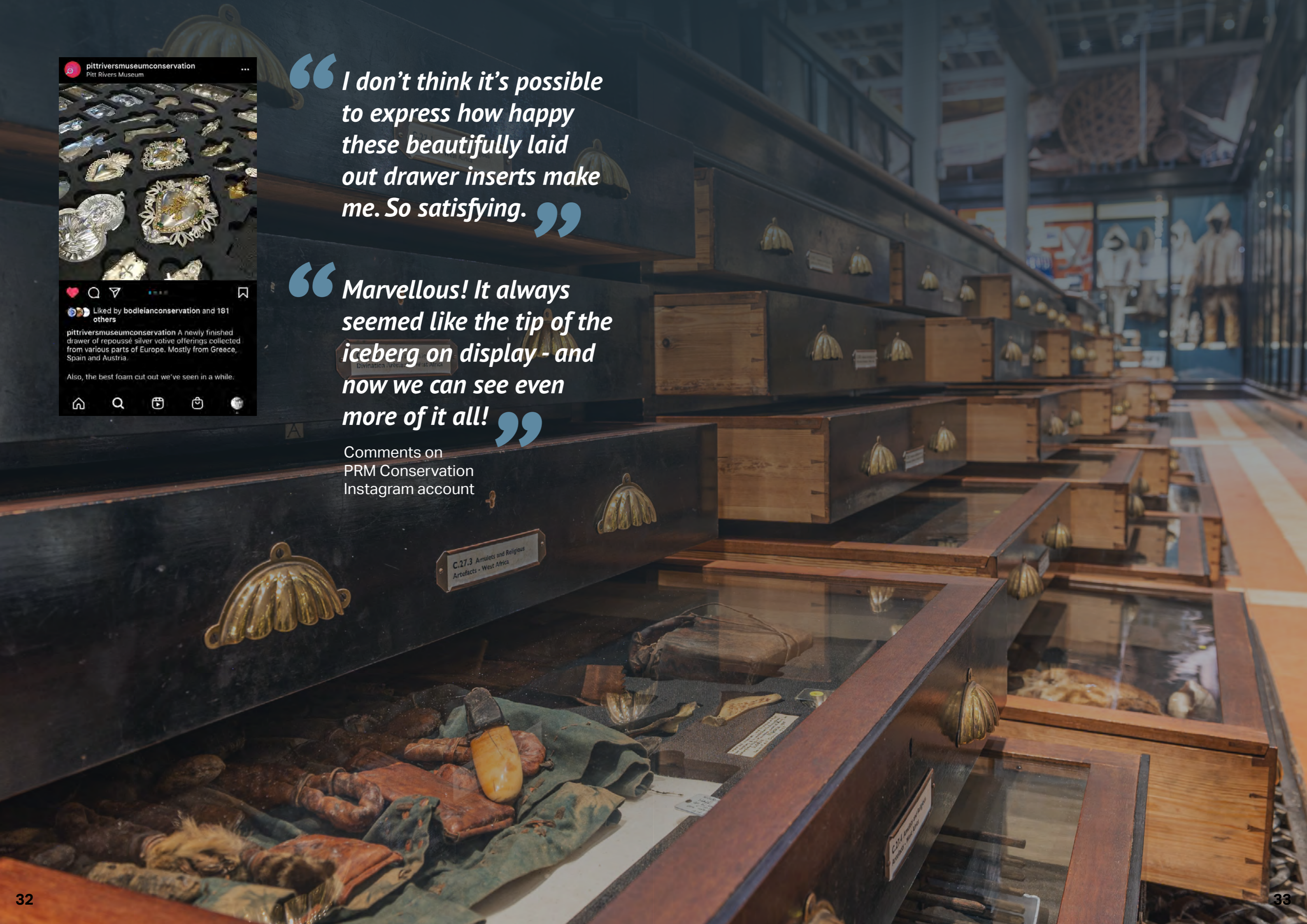
Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group and Internship Programme

The Pitt Rivers Museum Secondary School and Young People's Officer and our Families and Communities Officer, have been working alongside Oxford University students, Pitt Rivers Museum staff and local secondary school teachers to develop a new decolonised history curriculum explored through the collections cared for at the Museum. Developed during the pandemic, the collaboration has been online, adapting work to engage with the collections to meet hybrid acessibility needs in schools arising from the pandemic. With Zaiba Patel and Ben Taberer from Cherwell School, we are developing seven lessons to support Year 7 to broaden their understanding of how objects can tell stories about the ways in which the Museum has been a footprint of colonialism.

Starting with a Decolonising Working Group, this project has begun to bring people with multiple perspectives and lived experiences together to build new object-led narratives linked to the national curriculum. Working with 15 students, researchers and the Pitt Rivers team we are focusing on currently excluded narratives by developing sessions that share these stories of pre-1857 India, and the British Empire stories of the continent of Africa and the Caribbean Islands.

One of the key elements of the project is to develop multiple perspectives through working with people whose lived experience or research is shaped by South Asian and African narratives. Over time this programme will grow to ensure local community-led organisations, including local partners' voices in Oxford City, are taught on this curriculum, enabling young people to hear the stories of their elders.

Additionally, we have worked in partnership with the University Internship programme, resulting in five Micro-interns and two paid Summer Internships to further develop this work, bringing in student perspectives while also providing paid experience during a time when employment opportunities for young people have been restricted. The micro interns; Susmita Dave, Vivian Abrokwah, Peter Miller, Aniya Selvadurai, and Madeleine Wright completed their experiences online through Microsoft Teams.

Activate collections through
cutting edge research
and access

Activate collections through
cutting edge research
and access

Dialogue, Debate, Webinars and International Conferences

The Pitt Rivers Museum plays an active role in international and national dialogues and policy discussions on the role of museums. We have set up programmes and conversations to inspire and question current debates around identity, ownership, authority, access, art practice and creativity, archival and heritage practices, mobility, rights, cultural appropriation and redress. We aim to share learnings and listen to partners and critical friends within the sector to broaden our horizons. PRM staff actively participate in local, national and international debates, conferences, seminars and dialogues and actively participate and dedicate time to help inform policy-building in the museum-sector (working with Museums Association, ACE, DCMS, MEG and ICOM). Since November 2020 the Museum has started to run a bi-weekly online Webinar Series called *Radical Hope, Critical Change*.

Images from the Webinar series
Radical Hope, Critical Change

> " *If this had been an in-person event there could never have been such diverse attendance from all over the world, brilliant!* "
>
> Audience member feedback

Virtual teaching, Lectures and Conferences

This year, the research, curatorial and public engagement staff participated in over 140 online-conferences, dialogues, debates and webinars worldwide, sharing thoughts and building shared learnings and expertise with partners and community delegates. The breadth of participation is staggering, at times speaking with intimate groups of approximately 20 people, other times live-streaming to thousands, including over 10.000 listeners that participated in a Clubhouse event organised by MC Hammer as part of the OSF funded Action for Restitution to Africa project.

PRM academic staff have been engaged in **virtual teaching** with lectures being delivered both in Oxford, the UK and internationally: including the University of Turin on African Isotope Ecology and Archaeology; New York University; the Polit Seminar Series, University of Zurich; Materialising the Transient conference held at the University of Göttingen; the University of Tel-Aviv; the Technische University in Berlin; the Musée du quai Branly in Paris; the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow; St Andrews University Anthropology Department; the Centre for Global History at Edinburgh University; the Theoretical Archaeology Group conference at University College London; Tübingen University; Henry Moore Institute in Leeds; National Museum of World Cultures, the Netherlands; National Museums of World Culture, Sweden; Oxford Migration Conference; Leiden University, the Netherlands; Universidad de Sao Paolo; Said Business School; Queens University Belfast; Aarhus University and Moesgaard Museum;

Bryn Mawr College; the Courtauld Institute; Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis; the University of Minho; the University of Coimbra, Portugal; Villanova University; the University of Groningen; University of San Francisco; Howard University; the Chelsea Arts Club; National Maritime Museum ; l'Institut Historique Allemand, Paris ; Technische University Berlin; and Western University, Toronto, Canada.

The Pitt Rivers Museum also organised a six-week long online International Conference Series: 'Matters of Care: Museum Futures in Times of Planetary Precarity' drawing a global audience with each two-hour session reaching several hundreds of viewers. With speakers from across the European Union and the globe, the conference asked 'How ethnographic and world cultures museums can use their collections and galleries as spaces which create active discussion around the impact of humans on the planet, while also highlighting what long-term perspectives can tell us about sustainability for developing positive futures?'

Throughout this critical discourse we have been keen to acknowledge failings and the urgency around needs for improvement, while also focussing on constructive, positive actions that help direct us 'toward a future goodness' guided by the idea of Radical Hope.

Maasai Elders with Pitt Rivers on building caring relationships and earning trust live from Kenya and the UK. This is the radical hope I am here for.

Online event feedback

Online Webinar Series

The Pitt Rivers Museum's *Radical Hope, Critical Change* Programme reimagines what the future might be for museums like ours that have deep roots in coloniality and become spaces for healing. A programme of work and events, led by researchers, community partners and Indigenous experts, it **includes topics such as the display of human remains, equitable interpretation, repatriation, inclusive curriculum building and self-representation**.

This programme of online digital events supports and pays contributing community members and includes three Open Platform events. The bi-weekly webinars attract between 100-490 people. Live audiences are spread approximately 15% from our local Oxford community, 50% nationally and 35% internationally; interestingly the recorded sessions are watched by approximately 80% international audiences and especially those that due to time-differences or caring responsibilities cannot watch the live sessions. Sector-participation from many national, university and local authority museums has been high, with highest numbers coming from the UK, EU, US, Australia and India. Feedback has been very positive both from panel members and participants.

The series examines key issues and activities involved in the work of caring for and curating collections. The series debates contemporary relevance and responsibility at this critical point in the Museum's history. In doing so we are building on our ambition to become increasingly transparent about our working practices and include a range of perspectives in each event.

We are trialling creative ways of delivering content that are inclusive for wider museum audiences as well as academic and museum-sector communities. We are working with local and international partners and stakeholders to co-design events that reflect their needs, interests and priorities. Events are free of charge but facilitators who would not otherwise be paid for being involved are paid a fee to ensure that no one is excluded from the conversations. Themes have drawn upon the breadth of PRM work and have included considerations of object repatriation, LGBTQ+ representation in heritage, redisplay of the Museum's drawers and the power of language in museum labels.

Uptake of the webinars has been very positive and the chats are equally lively and enable colleagues from the sector to exchange ideas and even start partnerships. More than 65 countries have tuned in live, while other parts of the world access the events through YouTube recordings at times to suit them. The opportunity to engage with a world audience has been crucial to the success of these Radical Hope events. **As we move back towards physical events in the Museum, we will develop a hybrid approach** that enables us to reach out to varied audiences within our local area while continuing to build our international reach.

National and International Reach
The map below shows the spread of live-viewers' locations for the webinar series *Radical Hope, Critical Change*

Radical Hope events seek to reimagine museum practice, by focusing on how Western museums have relied on colonial ideas that promote a single view point, while erasing the many ways of knowing and being of people from around the world. From a total of fourteen events, highlights included:

Labelling Matters
Let's Talk Labels Webinar
Panellists discuss a multi-media and multi-sensory approach to museum interpretation and the problematic language of labels.
Panellist included:
Marenka Thompson-Odlum, Eiko Soga, Royce Ng, Daisy Bisenieks
Locations: Japan, New York, Oxford

Maasai Living Cultures
Getting to know you Webinar
Part of a project to build long-term, caring relationships to develop actions for reconciliation, redress and self-representation.
Panellists included:
Laura Van Broekhoven and 8 others
**Locations:** Tanzania, Kenya, Oxford

Beyond the Binary
Takatapui & Queer Pasifika Webinar
An international dialogue between Queer artists and museum professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia with the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Panellists included:
Dan Taulapapa Mcmullin
Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu
Dr Elizabeth Kerekere
Locations: Aotearoa New Zealand, Polynesia, Oxford
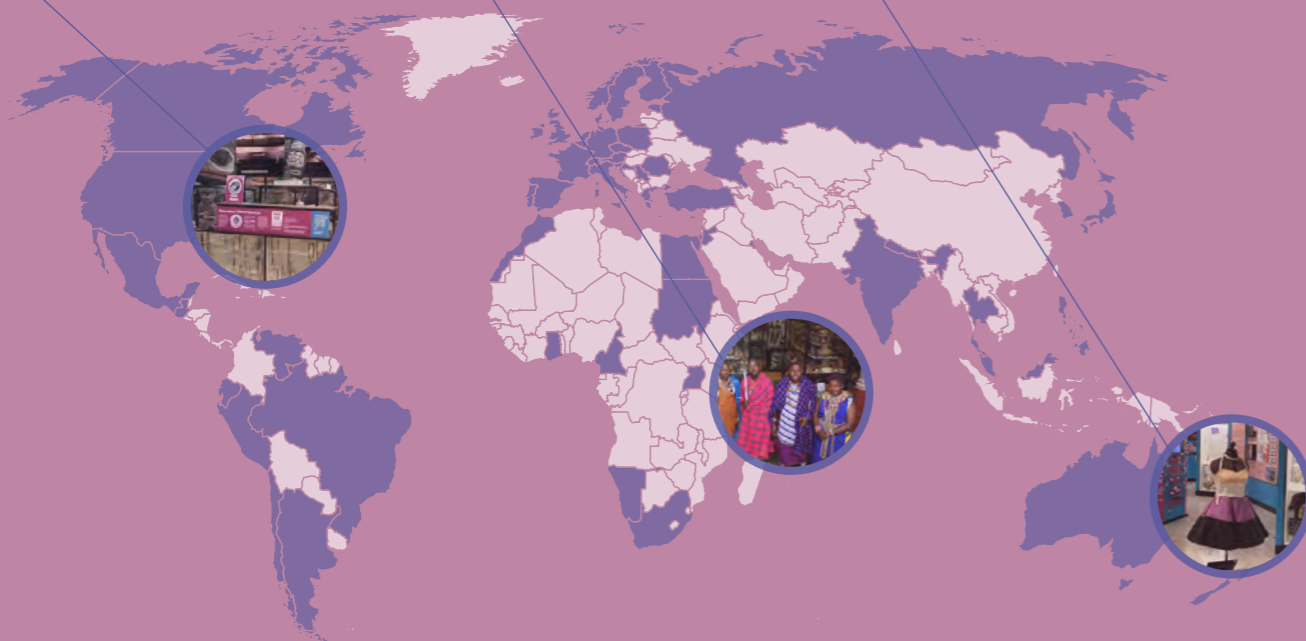
North America
Canada
Mexico
United States of America
United States Minor
Outlying Islands

South America
Argentina
Barbados
Brazil
Cameroon
Canada
Chile
Ecuador
Guatemala
Peru
Saint Lucia
Venezuela

Africa
Egypt
Ghana
Mauritius
Morocco
Namibia
South Africa
Sudan
Uganda

Europe
Andorra
Austria
Belgium
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Ireland
Isle of Man
Italy
Jersey
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Serbia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
UK

Middle East
Israel
Jordan
Kuwait
Turkey

Asia & Oceania
Australia
Hong Kong SAR
India
Japan
Korea Republic of
Macau SAR
Malaysia
Nepal
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand

The map below shows the broad range of viewers' locations for Radical Hope, Critical Change from across the UK

Aberdeen, Abingdon, Acton, Aylesbury, Banbury, Bath, Belfast, Bermondsey, Birmingham, Brackley, Brighton, Bristol, Bromley, Broxbourne, Camberley, Camberwell, Cambridge, Camden, Canterbury, Cardiff, Carlisle, Carmarthen, Catford, Chelsea, Chester, Chipping Campden, Chipping Norton, City of Westminster, Coventry, Cricklewood, Crofton Park, Darlington, Didcot, Dorking, Edgware, Edinburgh, Ely, Falmouth, Finchley, Forest Hill, Frome, Glasgow, Golders Green, Greenwich, Guildford, Hackney, Harlesden, Hereford, Herne Bay, Hornsey, Ipswich, Islington, Kensington, Kidbrooke, Kidlington, Kingston Bagpuize, Kingston upon Thames, Leatherhead, Leeds, Leicester, Lhanbryde, Littlehampton, Llanerchymedd, Loanhead, London, Loughborough, Luton, Manchester, Market Drayton, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Mitcham, New Cross, Newtonabbey, Northwich, Norwich, Norwood, Nottingham, Oxford, Paddington, Pinner, Plymouth, Plymtree, Poplar, Portsmouth, Preston, Reading, Redditch, Rhayader, Saffron Walden, Saint Ives, Sale, Sheffield, Southampton, St Austell (Cornwall), Stromness (Orkney Islands), Stroud, Surbiton, Swansea, Swindon, Telford, Tottenham, Totteridge, Upper Norwood, Wakefield, Walsall, Wandsworth, Wanstead, Warboys, Wellingborough, West Kilbride, Whitley Bay, Wirral, Witney, Wood Green, Woodstock, Worstead, York

Aberdeen
Glasgow
Edinburgh
Middlesborough
Belfast
Leeds
York
Manchester
Sheffield
Nottingham
Chester
Leicester
Birmingham
Coventry
Norwich
PRM Oxford
Cambridge
Swansea
Bristol
Cardiff
Reading
London
Bath
Southampton
Portsmouth
Brighton
Plymouth
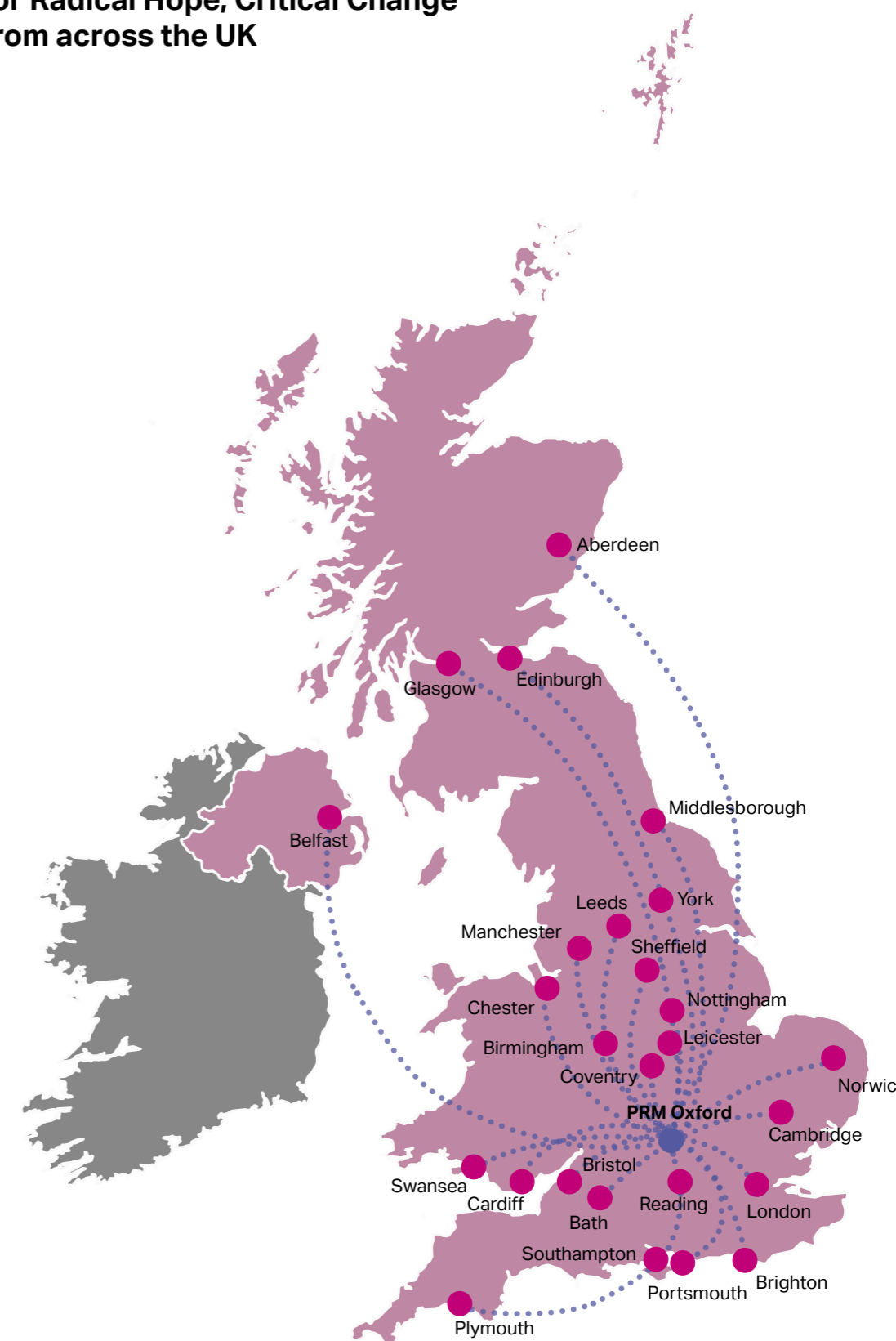
Bring Research to Life

Research and teaching during the pandemic

The PRM typically hosts hundreds of teaching sessions and research visits by scholars every year, both from University of Oxford, as well as higher education institutions in the UK and beyond. The rapidly changing public health guidance in 2020 meant that our core missions to engage learners and facilitate research needed to adapt quickly, utilising digital capabilities and ensuring that our collections remained a source of inspiration and knowledge, albeit remotely.

Key to our success in doing this has been our commitment over many years to digitise our collections, **with now more than 60% of our online databases illustrated with digital images.** This investment at the PRM has paid huge dividends when in-person visits became extremely limited, ensuring that students and researchers had sufficient imagery and documentation about the collections to continue their work in a new way.

PRM staff quickly **developed a programme of Virtual Research Visits** which often involve live remote communication with a researcher, enabling them to examine material digitally via an iPad by directing PRM staff, and asking questions relevant to their research about the object. Embracing digital technologies allowed a researcher in Brazil to consult a slide collection via a lightbox and overhead camera being operated by a PRM staff member, who then sent the images via a live communication on Microsoft Teams.

This form of research facilitation has meant that often researchers have not needed to make long distance research visits, reducing the impact on both the environment as well as the pandemic. It has led to permanent changes in the way the Museum will facilitate research in the future, with a more blended in-person and digital mixture defining what constitutes a research visit to the Museum.

Teaching sessions in the Museum have been adapted to allow class presentations focused upon particular objects to take place remotely, whereas tutor-led class seminars relating to the Museum's displays and objects removed from display or storage for closer viewing, were carried out in the Museum. These sessions were recorded and posted online to those students who were self-isolating or not in Oxford. The digital capture of such teaching sessions also had the benefit of allowing students to rewatch them, and make further notes to enhance their learning.
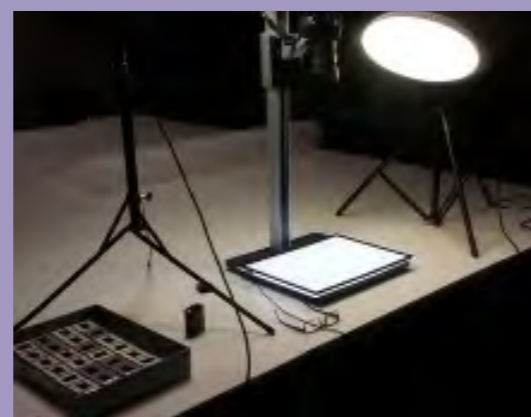
Using Microsoft Teams, a researcher in Brazil was able to view a slide collection at the Museum remotely

> " *At the start of the summer I feared that our first year course might fall victim to the pandemic restrictions, but thanks to all your efforts - generously running repeat visits, offering innovative online variants of the usual class, etc. - the students had a richly varied and rewarding series of visits* "

Research seminars were recorded and posted online for students at the Museum

Collections research with global communities

The diversity of the PRM's research and research facilitation work is truly international in nature. Whilst staff support much teaching and research in Oxford and at other UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the nature of the collections means that it has always been a globally connected institution when it comes to sharing its collections and knowledge. Whilst some in-person research and facilitation has been severely impacted by the pandemic, such as a planned community visit by representatives of the San people from southern Africa, many other research connections have begun, or else adapted well to new digital ways of making connections. A good example of this has been the launch of a series of **African Restitution Research** projects, funded by the Arts Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Open Society Foundations (OSF), which have enabled new research connections with Nigerian and Egyptian colleagues and communities.

Other connections continued online, especially those with the Maasai, which had already utilised participatory video methods as part of its ongoing research and dissemination strategy. Alongside our dedicated projects, the Museum continues to strive to providing access, whether remotely through digital means, or by planning for safely returning to on-site visits, responding to enquiries from international HEIs, researchers, and community groups.

Deputy Head of Research, Dr Ashley Coutu examining glass beads as part of a project looking at archaeological items from East Africa, to feature in a forthcoming display later in 2021

Pitt Rivers Museum Research Partnerships

The map below shows countries highlighted in green which the Museum is building or has partnerships with. Four examples include:

Virtual Research Visits
The Museum enabled a researcher in Brazil to view a slide collection via a lightbox and overhead camera being operated by a museum staff member, who then sent the images via a live communication on Microsoft Teams.

Locations: Brazil, Oxford

Rethinking Relationships and Building Trust Around African Collections
We are using online conferencing to discuss with Kenyan and Nigerian researchers the future of several collections from specific communities.

Locations: Kenya, Nigeria, Oxford

Talking Threads
This project focuses on textiles from Nagaland, the Arab world and from the NW Coast of the US. Digital engagement with those communities has been a core part of the project, involving the use of digital microscopes and webcams.

Locations: India, Middle East, USA, Oxford

Bishop Museum Partnership
The PRM is working with the Entomology Department at the Bishop Museum in Hawai'i to bring to life the endemic Hawaiian insect species featured in artworks by Solomon Enos, that respond to the Tale of Hi'iaka, and that have been commissioned through the PRM's Art Fund New Collecting Awards.

Locations: Hawai'i, Oxford

North America
Canada
Hawai'i
United States of America

South America
Brazil
Ecuador
Nicaragua
Saint Lucia

Africa
Botswana
Egypt
Ghana
Nigeria
Kenya
Tanzania
South Sudan
Guinea-Bissau
Mali
Mauritania
Morocco
Namibia
Senegal
Tunisia
Rwanda
South Africa
Zimbabwe

Europe
EU (all)
UK
Russia

Middle East
Oman
Palestine
Turkey
Syria
Yemen

Asia
China
India
Japan
Taiwan
Tibet

Oceania
Australia
New Zealand

Building relationships across borders and collections

The Museum is working to develop the way that we engage with communities of origin. We are aware that many of the objects in the collections we care for have a profound historical and emotional importance to these communities. The Museum was often seen as a stronghold of British colonialism by these communities and as a space where potentially difficult emotions and conversations would not be encouraged. The use of **online conferencing has created a virtual space, free from the sometimes-overwhelming feel of the building** itself and enabled more equal conversations on the subject of acquisition methods, curation and restitution. Initial conversations can take place face to face but without the months of planning and exorbitant costs that are often involved in a visit to the collections.
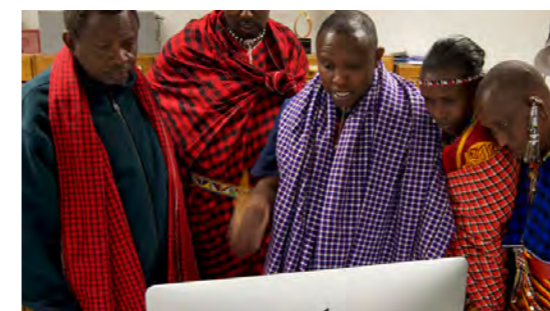
Maasai Living Culture delegates commenting on Maasai film footage at Pitt Rivers Museum

We hope that going forward this will mean that much more detailed planning and relationship building can take place well before a visit to the Museum and to the collections. Often those involved in a formal delegation may not have travelled extensively, and in some situations may not have left their communities before. They are carrying the burden and honour of representing their communities and there is a huge pressure for the visit to be a success. **The more the Museum can do in advance of any visits the better for everyone.** We are using online conferencing to discuss the future of several collections including human remains and collections from specific communities such as the discussions between Kenyan and Nigerian researchers and Museum staff as part of the DCMS-funded *Rethinking Relationships and Building Trust Around African Collections* project. The importance of being able to make **a personal direct connection** rather than being an anonymous world-famous institution cannot be underestimated.

3D scans and digital ways of seeing

The University of Oxford's *Open Cabinet* project uses augmented reality (AR) technology to create interactive virtual handling of 3D artefacts in the Museum. Working in partnership with the Oxford Internet Institute, IT Services and the Museum, the project aimed to embed objects more deeply into the learning experience at the University by facilitating their use as unique learning resources by staff and students, and to enhance the public visitor experience by using this innovative technology to improve access to objects without altering the highly valued appearance and atmosphere of the museums. The new interface included a range of accessibility features to reduce barriers to visitors, and features links to related, currently undisplayed, content.

Open Cabinet was adopted as a University service and fast-tracked into the new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Canvas. **It has scooped four teaching project awards and a teaching excellence award** for staff who have used the platform. Key to its success are high-resolution interactive 3D models which used advanced photogrammetry files composed of multiple images of the objects.

This year the team have been constructing these files for 30 objects in the collections and adding supplementary information to the platform. The creation of new resource case studies and testing of augmented reality features has been on hold during lockdown; however, user trials of the latter are planned to resume to establish how best to give visitor access on site. The existing content on *Open Cabinet* has been a great resource for hybrid teaching during lockdowns, and in the future the object scans will also be delivered via the Wolfson funded equipment, enabling virtual 360 degree views of objects on display and layered interpretation.

3D interactive models composed using advanced photogrammetry

GLAM Labs: Plastic Fantastic

The Pitt Rivers Museum's collection is home to over 7,000 musical instruments from around the world. In excess of 400 instruments in the collection are made from bone or ivory, such as ivory blast trumpets and bone flutes, and members of originating communities, researchers and students often request to play them. Unfortunately, many of these instruments are either too fragile to be played or have been shown to be contaminated by old pesticide treatments, used to prevent damage from museum pests, which now pose a health risk.

The *Plastic Fantastic* project attempts to offer an acceptable alternative to playing historic musical instruments, with the end-user confident that we have replicated the experience of playing the instrument as authentically as possible, so it not only looks and feels like the original but sounds like it too. The PRM Conservation team tested 3D printing technology and materials, before **the research team CT-scanned a playable 17th-century ivory flute** from the Bate Collection and printed a range of replicas using the latest resins and composites and a number of different 3D printing methods. The replicas were compared to the original, assessing the sound quality, appearance and playability, demonstrating the Museum's engagement with modern 3D scanning technologies to understanding materials and the multi-sensory life of objects, as well as visually-focused digital surrogates.

Talking Threads Project

Funded by Arts Council England, *Talking Threads* aims to enrich documentation on selections from the PRM's extensive textile collections in collaboration with the communities which made and used the textiles.

The project focuses on textiles from Nagaland, Palestine, and the NW Coast of America. Digital engagement with these communities is a core part of the project. We are **using specialist digital microscopes and digital SLRs to show the textiles meaningfully and in detail to weavers and other interested community members remotely**, including aspects of weave structure and construction.

These digital methods also enable us to run **live virtual sessions with communities abroad**, preceded by extensive communication for maximum benefit for all. This ongoing collaboration will allow for community knowledge and perspectives on the textiles to **feature on the Museum's database**, searchable online, and help shape future understandings. Digital images showing microscopic detail of materials and construction further demonstrates how digital methods are continually increasing ways of sharing collections for in-depth research and access, beyond existing photographs available on the online database, which are typically overview images of whole objects. The project team are also sharing progress in short videos and images on their recently launched Instagram account, **@prm_talkingthreads**.

> *so good to have such photographic details*

Comment on
@prm_talkingthreads
Instagram account

prm_talkingthreads

Liked by **skethany_bruce** and **11 others**
prm_talkingthreads A lengta loin cloth with cowrie shells and supplementary wefts of red dyed dog hair. Chang Naga people, Nagaland, India, 1919.

1923.84.753 on display @pittriversmuseum

#nagatextiles
#museumsfromhome

9 February

Improving digital care and access

Engaging the Senses

The *Engaging the Senses* project, 'Activating the Pitt Rivers Museum's Photograph and Sound Collections Through Digital Audio-visual Technology' aims to improve visitors' engagement by making currently inaccessible collections available in the galleries through new physical resources, including a digital interactive table top, listening station and interactive screen. The installation of these resources allows the Museum to display unique photographs and sound collections, improving the experience for visitors with disabilities, local communities and the wider public. The project was funded in 2019 by a grant of £70,500 from DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund. Work progressed well until lockdown began in March, which temporarily halted the testing and deployment stage. The installation of equipment was prioritised before the first lockdown, with further content development to commence when safe to do so.

This project has been on hold during the lockdowns, as the devices funded by DCMS Wolfson are all touch sensitive and located physically in the Museum. Once the devices are in use, we will seek to alter the UX so that they are motion triggered, and play selected content, rather than a touch trigger and user selected engagement.

New vertical screen with visual mock-up of interface design in progress

The devices will give access to nearly 20 film highlights, 10 of our photographic collections, and 30 of our sound recordings, none of which was previously accessible in the Museum galleries. The devices and supporting technology will also allow us to share rotatable 3D scans of objects from the *Open Cabinet* project and additional content on popular highlight objects in our Short Guide publication. Once the project recommences, previous interpretation of this content will also be revisited to help ensure we are making best use of latest developments and project work that has happened across the Museum over the past year.
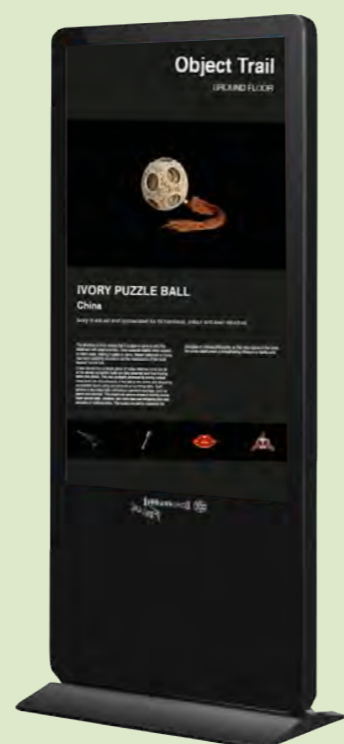
CMS/DAMS

Throughout 2020, the Museum has been focused on delivering an exciting new Content Management System (CMS) and Digital Asset Management System (DAMS). The project is part of a GLAM-wide funded project (£1.9m) to make a **transformational change in the way the museums in Oxford manage their collections.** The PRM is working closely with the Ashmolean since both museums are moving on to the same new CMS platform (Zetcom's Museum+) and DAMS platform (Montala's Resource Space).

Funded via the University of Oxford's IT Development Fund and supported by core-staff, **every single database record was worked on in some way**, including **214,763 digital image assets**. **Over 750,000 records have been cleaned**, and **over 44,000 new records created**, including 18,000 on a new database for manuscript collections and **1,300 newly researched and corrected terms have been populated**. This move is already giving the Museum an opportunity to establish best practice guidelines for digital asset preservation and optimal storage. The information in the CMS will be linked via an application programming interface (API) to the digital assets in the DAMS. Testing and development have already demonstrated how collections and research staff can manage the collections online, better document and record the collections, improve security, advance access, and establish new reporting functions.

It has also proved vital to 'clean' much of the existing digital data held in our existing systems. In terms of the DAMS, we currently have about **250,000 assets from the Photographic Collections successfully migrated** into the new system and are starting the migration of a similar number of object images. Their associated metadata is being uploaded in tranches.

764,633
Records checked or cleaned

250,000
Photographic Collections assets migrated

214,763
Digital image assets reviewed

44,109
New records added

1,300
Corrected terms populated

Art UK Sculpture Project

The Museum is also committed to improving digital care and access of our collections through digital partnership opportunities. In 2020 the Pitt Rivers contributed to the *Art UK Sculpture Project*. Art UK are a charity that collaborates with over 3,300 British institutions to create an online home for UK public art collections. The Museum provided images and data about **75 sculptures from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Pacific, North and South America**.

Making these sculptures available on a site that enables visitors to search across UK collections increases access to these collections and enables people to engage with and learn more about sculpture from a diverse range of cultures and time periods. The project also incorporated major learning, engagement and training programmes aimed to help people to share knowledge, exchange opinions and visit sculptures, both in-person and online. **2D artworks from the Pitt Rivers are already available online at Art UK from an earlier collaboration**; adding these sculptures has brought together over 270,000 artworks from the UK's national collections

https://artuk.org/discover/artworks

Digital Innovations

In the future we hope to adapt to more digital work, and use our recent technology resources to build on the funding from DCMS/Wolfson and our very popular 360° virtual tour of the Museum to allow increased digital and online access to museum projects such as our work with LGBTQIA+ communities through *Beyond the Binary* and with forced migrants through *Multaka-Oxford*. Additional content may include, for example, the 'Tipp-Ex' tours which discuss the colonial legacy that remains in some of the Museum's historic labels, as well as highlights from curator podcasts, and we have recently secured funding from the Museum Association Digital Innovation Fund to pursue this work over the coming year.
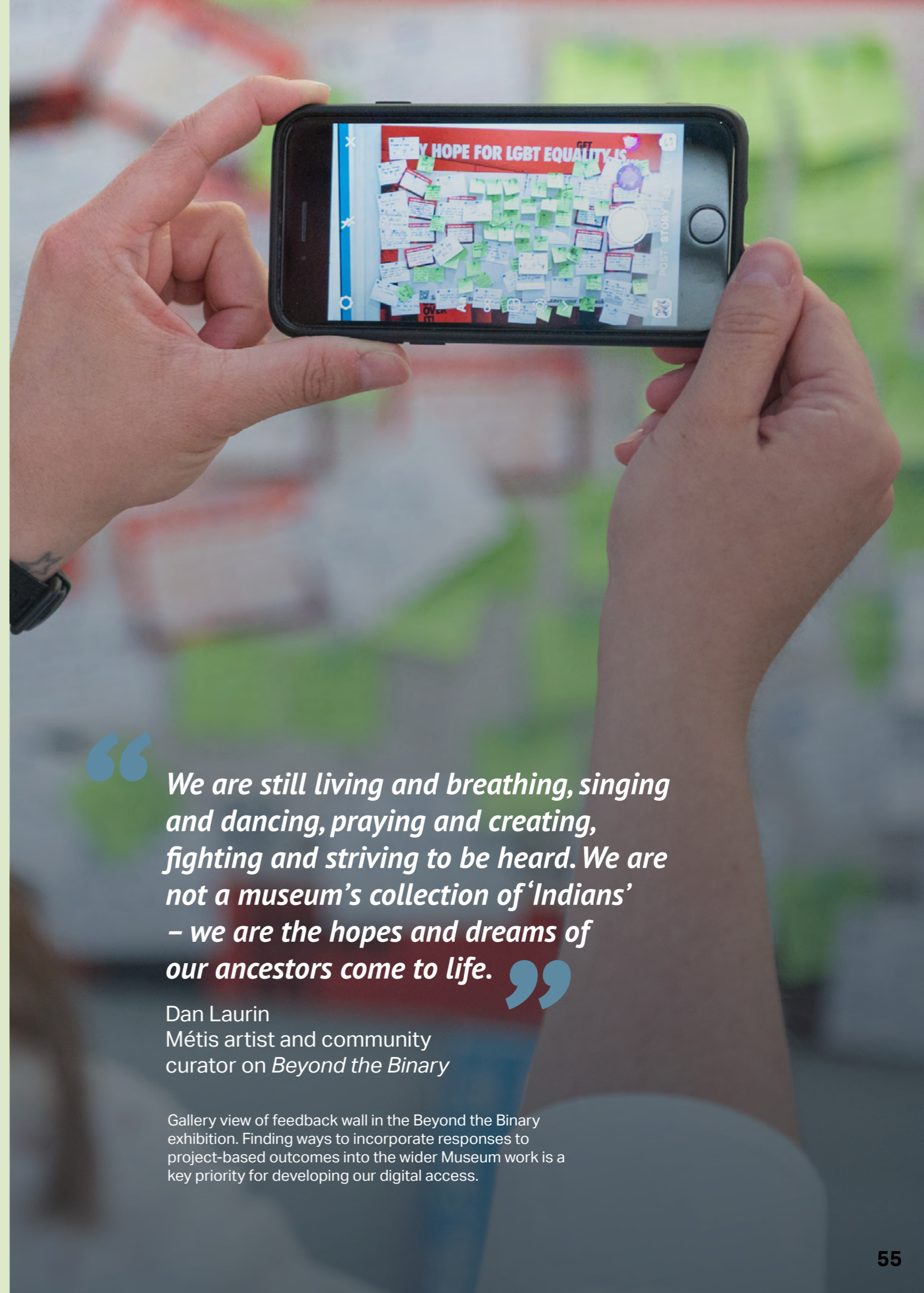
> We are still living and breathing, singing and dancing, praying and creating, fighting and striving to be heard. We are not a museum's collection of 'Indians' – we are the hopes and dreams of our ancestors come to life.

Dan Laurin
Métis artist and community
curator on *Beyond the Binary*

Gallery view of feedback wall in the Beyond the Binary exhibition. Finding ways to incorporate responses to project-based outcomes into the wider Museum work is a key priority for developing our digital access.

Extend our reach through partnerships

Schools programme

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, primary and secondary teaching was adapted to hybrid-online sessions. Live online school delivery became a replacement for existing on-site sessions and a format to test some sessions in our new 'decolonial schools' offering. Each session was bespoke and grew out of consultation with teachers and in response to demand. Together with teachers, different formats were trialled to investigate which worked best. Some sessions were delivered digitally to the classroom, others to students' homes, all dependent on the lockdown level at the time. Sessions were always hosted by the teacher for safeguarding purposes.

Most **art-focused digital delivery** took place in the galleries, using a tablet and broadcast via online platforms. The aim was to showcase exhibits that had been installed during lockdown, such as the contemporary art installation *Losing Venus*. Students studying art enjoyed the opportunity to observe an artist's responses to coloniality and its relationship to LGBTQ+ history. PRM staff also facilitated live sessions from the galleries, with teachers keen to challenge students' perceptions about museums as neutral spaces in response to the Black Lives Matter events over the summer of 2020.

Works of art by Nyema Droma and Christian Thompson, whose work **focusses on self-representation, were live streamed from the galleries**, alongside PowerPoint slides to enhance understandings. In addition, we were able to achieve a much wider reach, including delivering one virtual session to Singapore.

Sessions designed for the International Baccalaureate *The Theory of Knowledge* were delivered in response to a particular curriculum need and the focus was **decoloniality and cultural appropriation, very much in demand by teachers**. Initially aimed at over 16s, these sessions provoked in-depth discussions by students from KS3 to KS5.

Discussions online with students during sessions were always supported by the teacher, who would select students to answer questions or read out questions from the chat. Some students preferred to answer questions via audio, others were happy to be on camera, whilst certain schools had a 'no camera' or a 'chat only' policy for questions. It was necessary to **meet with teachers before the start of the session, to agree the online strategy**, mirroring what often happens in a 'real life' gallery session, when session leaders chat briefly with teachers to agree parameters and aims.

Learning staff were asked to create a video to be accessed online as part of an **enrichment festival at a local Oxford state secondary school**. It was produced using Zoom and basic video editing software. Videos like this are also being developed for organisations who want to **offer 'mixed delivery' summer courses**, where visiting groups experience a 'real' session, while students working remotely view bespoke digital content and explore the Museum's online collections.

"The content and delivery was perfect for the level of thinking we are asking them to explore."

Lyn Hall, Oxford City

Looking forward to how the schools programme can develop, online sessions offer the exciting prospect of allowing schools access to learning resources on a national and international scale. A **hybrid approach will allow us to tailor which sessions work well online and which content is better suited to on-site delivery**. For succesful online sessions, planning, good communication with the teacher and strong Wi-Fi are key factors. Many schools are already rebooking online sessions for next year, whilst some are interested in a mixed delivery, with online sessions acting as a pre-visit lesson to enable students to make the most of a scheduled on-site visit to the Museum.

"
To receive a live stream, one to one guided tour around the exhibition was so special, you gave each pupil the opportunity to engage with primary research in a way that is impossible with the current climate with your innovative online approach
"

Tanya Mundell,
Daubeney Academy

Digital-born Volunteer-led Outreach, Research and Exhibition: Multaka collaborative project

Multaka in Arabic translates in English to 'meeting point'. *Multaka-Oxford* aims to create volunteer opportunities and to use museums and collections as a 'meeting point' for bringing people together.

The Jenny Balfour-Paul collection of textiles, objects and photographs from the Arab world has provided a focus to bring together researchers and community collaborators, with multi-layered story-telling and engagement to deepen understanding and facilitate cross-cultural learning and understanding. The project has been delivered jointly with the History of Science Museum, and has featured a range of digital activities.

In early 2020, a **new communications strategy was developed with the project's blog and Facebook account reactivated**, and a separate *Multaka-Oxford* Twitter handle (@MultakaO) and Instagram account were launched to encourage wider engagement with the project. This new digital activity aimed to encourage volunteers, their families and friends to enter into dialogue with each other, textiles specialists and others in the museum and community sectors, and proved hugely important once the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown disrupted all on-site activities.

Social media engagement was boosted by Jenny Balfour-Paul, who communicated directly with volunteers through Twitter during national lockdowns. The new communications strategy broadened the volunteers' networks and facilitated a wider definition of community, which is particularly important for those families who are settling in Oxfordshire and developing new careers.

With Museum closures affecting on-site events, staff and volunteers adapted by planning and **delivering a two-week online event over Twitter, amassing a total of 71,465 impressions and 1,960 engagements.**

The project Collections Officer carried out an electronic audit of the collection in March 2020, supported by volunteer digital research to enhance understandings.

Ten digital volunteers undertook research independently and remotely over the space of four months. 35 objects and 12 photographs from the Textiles from the Arab world collection were researched. This resulted in 86 enhancements, as well as new narratives and craft projects that significantly enhanced our understanding of the collection. This research has now been added to the PRM online collections database.

To support volunteers working remotely during the pandemic, staff kept in regular contact through virtual meetings and piloted a volunteer digital research role. Research packs were sent out to support volunteers in their work which included the history, theology, manufacture and cultural significance of the collection.

Multaka-Oxford staff members developed a deeply reflective practice through professional supervision. This ensured a person-centred approach while helping to keep everyone safe through reflections on safeguarding, professional boundaries and working with adults who may be at a vulnerable time in their lives. In recognition of these working practices, the *Multaka-Oxford* project won the Collections Trust Award in 2019 and the Oxford University Vice-Chancellor's award for Equality & Diversity in Diversifying Participation in 2020.

The digital research accomplished during the project informed the **multi-vocal, co-curated Multaka online exhibition** *Weaving Connections: Local Perspectives from the Middle East, North and West Africa.* This exhibition uses the software tool Genially to integrate a rich body of storytelling and personal narratives into interpretations of objects from the collection. A series of interactive slides allow the user various options to journey through the collection and discover video content, image details of fabrics, alongside factual research and personal stories. To discover more visit:

https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/event/weaving-connections-0

Ongoing collaborations

Community Connectors

Supported by the University's Equality and Diversity Fund, this programme is working to forefront the plurality of perspectives and lived experiences of local people by developing 10 paid Community Connector posts and an allied training programme. Working in partnership with local cultural sector partners in Oxford City and Oxfordshire, Community Connectors work to identify and fill gaps and perspectives in project teams to ensure equity of interpretation and decision making. The project is facilitated by the GLAM Community Engagement team, and has moved online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digging the Crates

In collaboration with artist Rawz Campbell from the Urban Music Foundation and Inner Peace Records Collective, the Museum team are working to reinterpret the African and African-Caribbean instrument collections on display in the PRM. Currently in development, *Digging the Crates* will create new Hip Hop tracks through global and local musical partnerships. These musical exchanges will take place online to bring together and document traditional and contemporary music practice in short films and music samples that can be accessed in-person and online by our audiences, enabling them to listen to and create their own music from these new sounds. Central to this prototype project will be work on documenting and unpacking the colonial stories of Hip Hop with music researchers at the University of Oxford and the University of Virginia.

Windrush Steering Group

The group has been meeting online to plan the 2021 Windrush Year Celebrations taking place in the summer and Strictly Roots, an African-Caribbean Cultural Education Saturday School taking place from the autumn. The Windrush celebrations will be marked online with the Museum hosting the Annual Windrush Lecture via Zoom, as well as supporting the delivery of in-person activities around Oxford.

The PRM Families and Communities Officer is part of the Grass Roots Windrush Steering Group, a partnership that includes members from local arts organisations, (Fusion Arts, Unlock the Chains and Kuumba Nia Arts), as well as Heritage organisations (African Kultural Heritage Initiative, Museum of Oxford, the Pitt Rivers Museum and Ashmolean) and Oxford Brookes University.

Engagement with older people

Keeping Connected: Digital Engagement with Older People

In partnership with the Museum of Oxford, the PRM has been developing e-newsletters. These *Keeping Connected* newsletters are created with the existing audience of older people who take part in the in-person *Meet Me at the Museum* programme. Each newsletter shares the groups' personal stories and highlights opportunities for older people to engage with digital activities hosted by the gardens, libraries and museums. A hard copy version of the newsletter is distributed by the City Council through the Oxford City Hubs to 500 older people who may currently be experiencing isolation and loneliness.

In Control By Design and Messy Realities

During the pandemic the *In Control by Design* and *Messy Realities* teams continued to meet socially on Zoom. These project teams bring together people with lived experience of long-term healthcare needs, researchers and artists to explore healthcare questions stimulated by the collections the Museum cares for. In 2021 the *Messy Futures* exhibition will display their shared experiences through commissioned object photographs composed with the group and by artist Susan Diab and photographer Suzy Prior. A selection of these will be replicated online as a digital interactive exhibition, telling the multiple interpretations made by the team, and creating space for our online visitors to think with us on these healthcare questions.

MESSY FUTURES

Opening September 2021
Long Gallery, Pitt Rivers Museum

Beyond the Binary

The exhibition *Beyond the Binary: Gender, Sexuality, Power* is the outcome of a major National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) project, Queering and Questioning Collections and Displays at the Pitt Rivers Museum. The co-curated exhibition is about queer lived experiences, putting the voices of LGBTIAQ+ communities at the heart of the Museum.

The exhibition has been developed in partnership with over forty community partners, from local and international activists to Indigenous artists and researchers. **12 community curators have worked with the project team to choose themes for the exhibition, research material and produce written text.**

A strong set of digital outputs has complemented the exhibition, including a series of **five podcasts** and online webinars, which have attracted over 300 attendees to the live Zoom talks. Digital outreach and engagement has been enhanced by the project's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, where **937 people have viewed the highlights tour on Instagram in the first two weeks since launch**. A Social Media Assistant has now been appointed to further develop our social media presence over the coming months.

In response to the pandemic, the project has moved all of its programming online. **With a focus on co-curation, a vibrant programme of online events have been developed** in partnership with LGBTIAQ+ community groups, activists and researchers. This **events programme** has been launched to coincide with the opening of the project's exhibition on 1 June 2021.

The project also moved the December 2020 partners catch-up event online, with a high proportion of community curators, critical friends, steering group and other partners attending and engaging with the development of the project and celebrating the meeting of key milestones.

12
Community curators

20+
Exhibition events

300
Attendees to live talks via Zoom

900+
Views to Instagram highlights tour

> *...to have an institution in the city where I live, not only put on an exhibition celebrating the exploration of gender and sexuality, but also explicitly highlight that it occurs in cultures across the world and the impact colonization has had on gender expression, mean so much and is a genuinely wonderful thing.*

Email feedback from exhibition visitor

Infrastructure improvements

Digital-based improvements

In 2020, the PRM introduced **a new visitor-counter system** (FootFall) that allows staff to accurately track the number of visitors we have in various areas of the Museum. Using Wi-Fi tracking software and heatmap analytics, with a range of reporting metrics, the system will allow us to better understand our visitors' use of the Museum. In addition, a new traffic light system is being introduced to allow for the control of numbers of people in the galleries and support the safe reopening of the Museum. Five strategically located visitor counters now report data to mobile devices used by Front of House staff to help monitor visitor numbers across the Museum.

The **CCTV system was recently upgraded with additional cameras and a hybrid analogue/digital CCTV recorder.** We currently operate over 25 cameras, and parts of the system are linked to the IT network. In the future, improvements to the number of IP points in the main building would facilitate further upgrades.

The Salto **digital access system, installed in 2020**, utilises IT networks in the Museum and across the university with devices using IP addresses. Our key management system includes two TRAKA cabinets, both of which have IP addresses and use the internal network infrastructure. In 2021 we are introducing a multiple-authentication code system.

Commercial Systems and Retail

Galaxy Digital Ticketing System

The Galaxy system was introduced in September 2020 when the Museum re-opened after the first lockdown. The booking system is jointly shared with the neighbouring Museum of Natural History due to shared buildings access. Bookings for the September 2020 to January 2021 period were at **81% capacity**, although the overall number of visitors allowed in the Museums had to be reduced from 2,000 pre-pandemic to 500. The upper galleries and Special Exhibitions space have been reopened in 2021, and we are seeing **donation per visitor (DPV) versus 2020 increasing from 11p to 27p, a 142% increase.**

This significant increase demonstrates that visitors are much more likely to donate at the point of booking online, as the web page prompts users with suggested donations. Visitors are also **donating when attending online events**, with a webinar in March 2021 booked through the Galaxy system **raising £285 for 380 free tickets booked.**

Online Guided Tours

Online tours of the Museum have been developed and trialled, starting with a literary and film tour and a history and highlights tour. The target audience is the regular museum visitor, families and individuals, and corporate exclusive tours. The aim of the digital tours is to provide a personalised experience with a live Q & A zoom webinar. Market research conducted by GLAM indicates that the experience carries a commercial value and will continue beyond the pandemic. The first soft pilot attracted **34 paid tickets at £8 (£272 total) with an average of £2 donation** in addition to cost price.

Online Retail Sales, Click & Collect

During the pandemic, GLAM institutions have collaborated to share retail resources and knowledge to maximise online commerce. The sales of Pitt Rivers Museum products through the Ashmolean website since 1 August 2020 were £454. This is reported at a cost price from invoices to the Ashmolean from the PRM and it includes a mark-up to cover mailing and administration costs. This is a very small contribution but approximately a **50% increase** on the previous year prior to the pandemic.

Best sellers continue to be PRM publications and a few unique gifts (e.g. thumb pianos). Due to the physical shop closure at the Museum during the pandemic, merchandise has been sold through online sales and a reduced line of goods in a shared physical shop space at the neighbouring Museum of Natural History. During the pandemic, resources have been focused on making core merchandise available rather than developing new product ranges.

In a recent 2021 update to the booking page, the visitor now has the opportunity to purchase the *PRM Short Guide* (£5.00) and the more detailed Museum publication *A World Within* (£16.99) at the point of booking tickets, for collection on the day of their visit. This has been trialled by the Oxford Botanic Gardens during the pandemic and has proved to be a successful income stream.
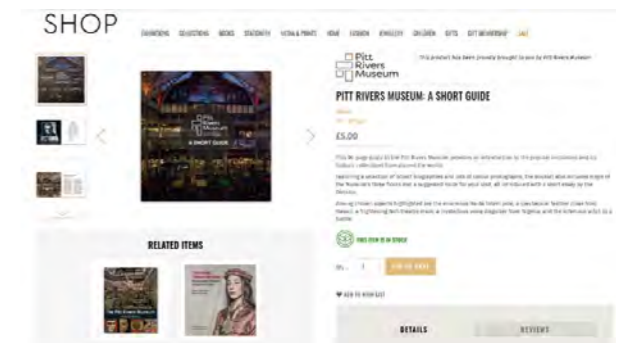
Matt Smith's publication accompanying the *Losing Venus* exhibition is also available in the online shop.

Pitt Rivers Museum

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

UKRI Research England

Art Fund_

HERE FOR CULTURE