

Press Release

10.7.19

Pitt Rivers Museum wins University Public Engagement with Research Award

The Pitt Rivers Museum has won a Building Capacity Award in this year's University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards. These awards celebrate excellence in public engagement across the University. The announcement was made at an awards ceremony hosted by Vice-Chancellor Professor Louise Richardson at Keble College, Oxford, on 10 July 2019.

In September 2017 the Museum established a strategy to facilitate high-quality public engagement with research. The resulting programme speaks to the Museum's core vision to decolonise and re-frame the collections by enabling new voices and stories to be heard.

The core elements of this innovative programme are as follows:

- Museum staff working in genuine mutually-beneficial partnerships with researchers and communities
- Developing new and exciting but robust engagement methodologies
- Co-creating a wide range of activities and formats such as events, exhibitions and workshops
- Ensuring public engagement with research is positioned as a core activity for the Museum
- A commitment to continuous improvement and evaluation.

The programme of engaged research, issues and topics has been diverse and includes: assisted living solutions; the memorial practices of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda; archaeology and the history of metal; LGBTQ+ activism.

The socially-engaged approach has had significant outcomes leading to considerable growth in the number of researchers looking to work with the Museum, including those from research disciplines who may not traditionally be associated with the Pitt Rivers. It has also led to a broadening in the diversity of audiences with whom the Museum engages.

Other impacts include researchers gaining public engagement experience and skills, such as communication and co-curation, and the opportunity to gain new research insights.

"We are used to engaging with people as patients in healthcare settings, but being able to work in the Museum allowed us to develop different kinds of relationships with people and to develop skills in engagement with people as citizens. This experience has enriched our current research and will inform our future work." said one participating researcher.



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Pitt Rivers Museum
South Parks Road
Oxford OX1 3PP
T: +44 (0)1865 270927
F: +44 (0)1865 270943
prm@prm.ox.ac.uk
www.prm.ox.ac.uk

“Our evaluation also demonstrates many benefits for the engaged public, including learning, building social networks, new skills and empowerment.” said Jozie Kettle, Public Engagement with Research Officer, Pitt Rivers Museum.

“I wasn’t a teacher, wife, mother, helper or carer responsible for others but just ME! I have never taken recreational drugs but I was on such a ‘high’ after Monday’s session... I imagine that’s what it’s like.” commented Jean, proud octogenarian and public participant.

Professor Alison Woollard, Academic Champion for Public Engagement with Research, University of Oxford, says: *“These awards highlight the many ways that Oxford’s researchers engage with the public. This includes informing and empowering people by sharing research findings; working in partnership with communities to shape research and enabling citizens to take part in the research by collecting and analysing data through Citizen Science. These winning projects also demonstrate that excellence in engagement results in a ‘win-win’ for both researchers and public alike.”*

About the Awards

The Vice-Chancellor’s Public Engagement with Research Awards recognise and reward those at the University who undertake high-quality engagement activities and have contributed to building capacity in this area. The awards are in three categories – Early Career Researcher, Building Capacity and Projects. Entrants can be at any level in their career and activities of any scale are welcome.

Winning entries receive recognition for their achievements at the Vice-Chancellor’s Public Engagement with Research Awards Ceremony (10 July 2019). The Vice-Chancellor’s prize will also be announced at the ceremony and the winner will receive a cash prize of £1,500.

Further Information

Project lead: Jozie Kettle, Pitt Rivers Museum
Email: jozie.kettle@prm.ox.ac.uk

Extra links

<https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/messy-realities>

<https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/from-mine-to-metal>

<https://vimeo.com/306151198>

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