

The Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford Magazine



SOUTH PARKS ROAD, OXFORD, OX1 3PP

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Between Friends, Editorial, New Friends and Obituary
- 3 From The Director and From The Museum
- 4 Pecking Birds Toys
- 5 Reframing Hawaiian Cultural Art
- 6 Snaphaunce Pistols
- 7 Frank Bowden and the Raleigh Bicycle
- 8 The Coconut
- 9 Circuses
- 10 Saint Domingue and the Story of Toussaint Louverture
- 11 The Controversy of the Nude
- 12 Museum Friends' and Diary Dates

Cover image: Toussaint Emanant Jaune, mixed media on canvas in artist's frame, by Edouard Duval Carrié, *Friend*

The proposed change of relationship between the Friends and the Museum has made significant progress since my last note. The PRM has discussed the proposal with their Executive Board and their Board of Visitors; both bodies were broadly positive. In February, we had a joint PRM-FPRM zoom meeting; arrangements for the PRM to take over the functions of our Treasurer, Paul Goose, and Membership Secretary, Rosemary King, are now well advanced. The Friends will continue as the group that organises our events and our magazine. Our events are already advertised on the PRM website, and my hope is that there will be a gradual increase in the degree to which our programme will be integrated with the talks organized by the Museum. A joint events team will meet quarterly, the PRM component being led by Andy McLellan (Head of Education) and the FPRM by Juliet Eccles, as at present. Louise Hancock, head of PRM marketing, will add FPRM to her brief. Beth Joynson will be taking over Membership issues from Rosemary and will liaise with Marian Nicholls for communication with the membership. Many Friends have met Beth at our talks, where she has been a welcoming presence, making sure that we have access and that the doors are locked behind us when we leave.

The final essential matter is to define a liaison group. Karrine Sanders will lead the PRM management team, with the assistance of Louise, Andy and Beth; the PRM Director, Laura van Broekhoven will act as sponsor. I will lead the FPRM group during the transition, but we also need some new FPRM blood! Any Friend who would enjoy being actively involved in this interesting stage of our history should contact me for details.

Gillian Morriss-Kay, *Chair of the Friends*



Photo © Studio Edmark

Editorial



Photo © Dawn Osborne

Recent events have changed the world and while we will endeavour to remain the same publication you hopefully love with a focus on interesting objects and one eye on the past, like the Museum itself we must move with the times. The article from Marenka Thompson-Odlum on page 5 of this issue deals with the importance of understanding other cultures if we attempt to record them for posterity and how this

involves interaction and empathy with the people we seek to engage with. We are planning another article re the changes to labelling in the Museum. We will not seek to deny the past rather to document it in a way that honours the cultures in which we are so interested and thereby do ourselves credit by seeing those cultures as living and breathing and equal to our own in terms of civilisation and worth. After all, the reason most of us love the Museum is because it provides a window to the world and we must make sure we clean our metaphoric panes and get the best view possible in sympathetic understanding.

Once again thanks so much to everyone in the Magazine design, editorial and distribution teams and our wonderful contributors including Museum staff who have all meant no interruption whatsoever in publication despite all the challenges we all face at present.

If you want to contribute to the Magazine or you just have an idea for an article you would like to see, please do get in touch.

Dawn Osborne, *Editor*

New Friends

New Friends: Dr. Vanessa Champion, Hertfordshire, Mrs Gillian Howe, Oxford

To learn more about the benefits of becoming a Friend, or if your details change, please contact the membership secretary **Rosemary King** at: rhking17@gmail.com, cc ea@prm.ox.ac.uk or **01367 242433**.

Obituary

Obituary: Dr. Jane Mellanby (Impey), Aged 82

Museum News

Photo: © PRM



This has been a very strange year indeed, but I am fortunate to work with a great team who have kept the Museum going, even without visitors coming in. Many staff continue to work at home, are on furlough or come to the Museum one or two days a week. The mail, which can seem a routine job, is anything but – our receptionist Lauren makes a weekly trip in to make sure either

that our mail has been picked up by our neighbour, the Museum of Natural History, or that it has been delivered to our receptionist's office. All this helps us to keep the academic work of the Museum continuing

smoothly, enabling us to keep the building ticking along while we await the day when we can welcome visitors in person again as well as online. There are much more exciting times to look forward to as this day gets closer.

We are particularly delighted that we will have the opportunity to work more closely with the Friends, as the running of their organization becomes more integrated with that of the Museum. The wonderful efforts of the Friends have meant so much to the Museum and we are committed to ensuring that their work continues to thrive and that being a member remains as rewarding and attractive as it has always been.

I don't think I have been more proud of our Museum teams and our Friends than during this difficult time.

Karrine Sanders *Chief Operating Officer*

From the Director

Photo: © PRM



March the first 2021 was the fifth anniversary of my appointment as Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Browsing through our annual reports on that day, I felt proud and appreciative of the brilliant PRM team and what we have achieved together, progressively deepening and broadening our partnerships locally and globally. Even during this extraordinarily difficult year we have been busier than ever. Two thirds of our object collections have been packed, ready to be moved to newly refurbished stores; we have amalgamated our databases and in the process cleaned over half a million records and updated outdated and derogatory cultural group names; we have reviewed all of the Museum's (many!) cases and we are rearranging all of the drawers in the permanent displays – one of the most visually pleasing projects we have ever undertaken.

We were finalists for the Museum of the Year Award; our award-winning Multaka work with refugees and forced migrants led to a much-loved Radical Hope webinar series that is sharing this project with the public at large, drawing audiences from across the globe. Last month we featured prominently in the Art Fund series of short films highlighting exceptionally inspiring museums. A drone was used to display the Museum as it has never been seen before, and comedian Josie Long interviewed staff members about a range of our favourite things!

We continue to forge transformative partnerships across the world and have set up an international research community that reflects the quality, diversity and wide-ranging appeal of the Museum as an academic institution. Our work with students, schools and artists publicises our contemporary collecting practices and shows us to be one of the most intriguing and inspiring museums in the world. All of this has happened behind closed doors for much of the current year; nevertheless, we have been far from invisible since crucial aspects of our work have achieved prominent press coverage. These include the widely reported removal of human remains from display and the work we are doing on reconciliation and redress with Maasai delegates. Curator Dan Hicks's book *'The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution,'* which reflects on the troubling relationships between colonial practices of collecting and military violence, was launched in October and is already in its third print.

PRM Research Fellow Ashley Coutu's research on Zimbabwean ivory and heritage also gained much publicity, in the NYT, BBC and a wide array of international news outlets. This led to further unprecedented press coverage of the work developed at the Museum. We are analysing our web presence, which was mostly positive and factual and was 68% up from last year – so although we were closed we have very much kept in the public eye. We are contacted on an almost daily basis by researchers, press and other Museums to talk about our work, our partnerships and our events and work with the collections and are always keen to relate as we know that the only way to work is by staying connected to the many global stakeholders that bind the Museum to the world.

At last, our enforced closure appears to be approaching its end: we are relieved and delighted to announce that we will reopen our characteristic doors on the 17th of May 2021.

Laura Van Broekhoven *Director*

The Mystery of the feeding birds



Photo © PRM

The feeding birds displayed in case C70A PRM000043228

In issue 92, Summer 2018, Felicity Wood's article 'Toying With a Simple Mechanism' looked at an Inuit bone carving in the form of a mechanical toy 'feeding birds', (Accession number 1935.52.6) displayed in Case C70A. It was collected in Ammassalik, or Angmagssalik (now Tasiilaq) in East Greenland, and obtained by the PRM by exchange with the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, in 1935. It is basically a parallelogram linkage toy, but it has always been a rather surprising object to me because it differs from the usual pattern of such toys, which are found in many forms and many materials all over the world, in that the joints are not hinged with a pivot. Instead the two upright elements of the parallelogram (forming the 'legs' of the birds) slide freely in slots in the two crosspieces. The bodies of the birds above, and the thickened bases of the 'legs' below prevent the structure from coming apart. The whole toy is made from bone (or walrus ivory?).

I had not found any other examples of this variant mechanism until an internet search led me to two more. Firstly, in the University of Alaska Museum of the North: Wooden pecking birds, unknown date (UAM:EH:UA66-011-0353AB). This appears from the images online to be similar to the PRM toy. The slotted crosspieces are wooden (one is broken), and the birds are bone or ivory. Like the PRM toy it was collected in the Ammassalik district of Greenland, and it too was originally in the collection of the Danish National Museum, being 'assigned' to the Museum of the North in 2014.

Secondly, in the Arctic Material Culture Collection in the Polar Museum of the Scott Polar Institute: Y:2011/79/22 Wooden toy with 'pecking' birds, collected by Elizabeth Mary (Kit) Wager who, with her husband, sister-in-law



Photo © Robert Race

The author's wooden copy of the PRM toy

and brother-in-law (expedition leader) overwintered in 1935/36 with the British East Greenland Expedition based in Kangerdlugssuaq (<https://www.oocdtp.ac.uk/gender-and-histories-arctic-field-science-1900-1950>). This toy also appears to have the same mechanism, but the whole thing is made of wood. The birds are beautifully carved, simple, but elegant. They and the crosspieces look like cedar, with the 'legs' of the birds in a lighter coloured pine.

The PRM notes give 'pukutartân' as a local name. I can't find that word elsewhere, but Schultz Lorentzen's Dictionary of the West Greenland Eskimo Language, first published in 1927, gives 'PUKUTTUUSAT' ('Pukugtûsat', old orthography) 'A toy, two birds which alternately pick up seeds' which sounds spot on. They don't really pick up seeds, but look as if they might. Long experience in making mechanical toys has taught me that given a little simple movement people are very ready to fill in the gaps.

From photographs, I have made wooden copies of all three toys, trying to get the proportions right. The length of the slots in the crosspieces was difficult to judge. The action of the toys seems similar to the usual pivoted examples: moving the cross bars back and forth tips the birds alternately so that they appear to peck for food. However, the movement is rather looser and more random. This possibly gives a more life-like effect – the movement of the usual construction, with a pin at each of the four corners of the parallelogram, is very mechanical and entirely predictable.

The toy was well enough known for a word for it to appear in a dictionary of West Greenlandic in 1927. The question I am now left pondering is whether the design may be copied directly from a (yet unfound) similar toy imported from elsewhere; evolved in the region from a more conventionally constructed import; or conceived *ab origine* in the region?

Robert Race, Friend

The author's wooden copies of:

Above: The wooden toy in the Arctic Material Culture Collection in the Polar Museum of the Scott Polar Institute

Below: The wood and bone toy in the University of Alaska Museum of the North



Photo © Robert Race

'The fabric of reality also needs frequent upkeep': A Hawaiian Case Study of Phase Two of Labelling Matters

1. The Paddler, 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: *Engytatus henryi*. Artist Solomon Enos.

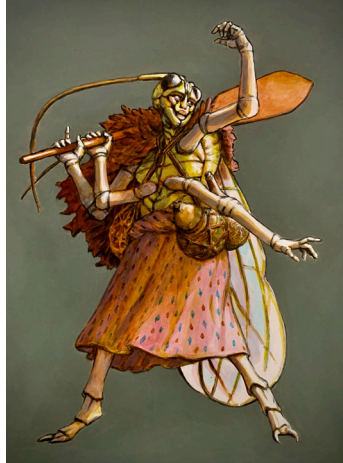
On the 16th December 2020, I presented the Labelling Matters project to the Friends. In it I outlined the various types of problematic language within the museum's displays as well as the methodology I employed in a survey of the museum's linguistic practice. In this article I describe how the results of the survey have influenced my subsequent actions and illustrate decolonial practice in action.

In my presentation I outlined the three processes through which problematic language often occurred within the PRM: the creation of false hierarchies, the privileging and production of certain types of knowledge and the imposing of dominant cultural norms. For example, the Hawaiian and wider Polynesian collection in the PRM is often framed around the following narratives:

1. It is centred around a European figure and European 'contact'.
2. It confers greater importance on men than women.
3. It significantly narrows the scope of Polynesian cosmology.

The final point is very apparent in the Cook-Voyage Collection case: the two parties, Cook's entourage and the peoples of Oceania are referred to as Voyagers and Islanders respectively. This labelling conveys a sense of island isolation, and completely negates the polycultural and epic scale of Polynesian cosmology. Hawai'i itself is made up of a multitude of islands, different but culturally connected. The epic tale of Hi'iakapiolopele traverses across all the islands, across the ocean and delving into the subterranean. The Epic illustrates the complexities and interconnectedness of Oceania; like many of the myths, legends, oral traditions and cosmologies of the peoples, it becomes evident that they did not conceive of their world in such isolated and microscopic proportions as suggested by the term 'Islanders'.

Guided by the aim of beginning to address these issues I commissioned work from Hawaiian artist and activist



3. The Kapa Artist, Insect and Arachnid People of Subterranean Hawai'i, commissioned by the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England. 9x12", Acrylic on Bristol board, 2021. Endemic Hawaiian Arachnid: *Misumenops vitellinus*. Artist Solomon Enos.

Solomon Enos, funded by the Art Fund New Collecting Award. The project was envisioned to collect contemporary objects from four source communities that act simultaneously as artefacts and as new forms of interpretation, by speaking directly to the existing

collection. His series of 16 paintings accomplishes the project's aim by challenging the three major problematic narratives mentioned above.



2. The Sacred Dancer 'uli 'uli (feathered dance rattles), 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* (Hawaiian Sphinx moth). Artist Solomon Enos.

The series is based on a scene from the Hawaiian mythological epic Hi'iakaikapoliolopele, where the heroine Hi'iaka encounters a subterranean world populated by shape-shifting insect-people. Each insect character is based on an endemic Hawaiian species combined with Hawaiian objects from the PRM collection.

All the characters with their various skills are presented as equally important to the community, from the male 'sacred hula dancer' whose "role is as important as the community's weavers and kapa makers, for the fabric of reality also needs frequent upkeep" to the kapa artist whose "printing tradition is perhaps a form of subliminal communication, with wisdom encrypted within the choice of line and form." The paddler with her heroic pose traverses the underground water-world reminding us that the Hawaiian world is vast.

In this imagined scene there is no division of the natural and human world: Enos presents fully realised characters that erase that dichotomy. These insect hybrids exist in the tale of Hi'iaka as both insect and human, highlighting the life cycle. Enos doesn't only point to cyclical planetary sustainability, but also to planetary precarity. Hawai'i has been referred to as the extinction capital of the world: for its birds, plants, insects, and other species, the past few centuries have been devastating. By exploring this subterranean world and highlighting insect species endemic to Hawaii, Enos reminds us all to do better.

Marenka Thompson-Odlum Research Associate, PRM

All images © PRM

An Italian Pistol: Flintlock or Snaphaunce?

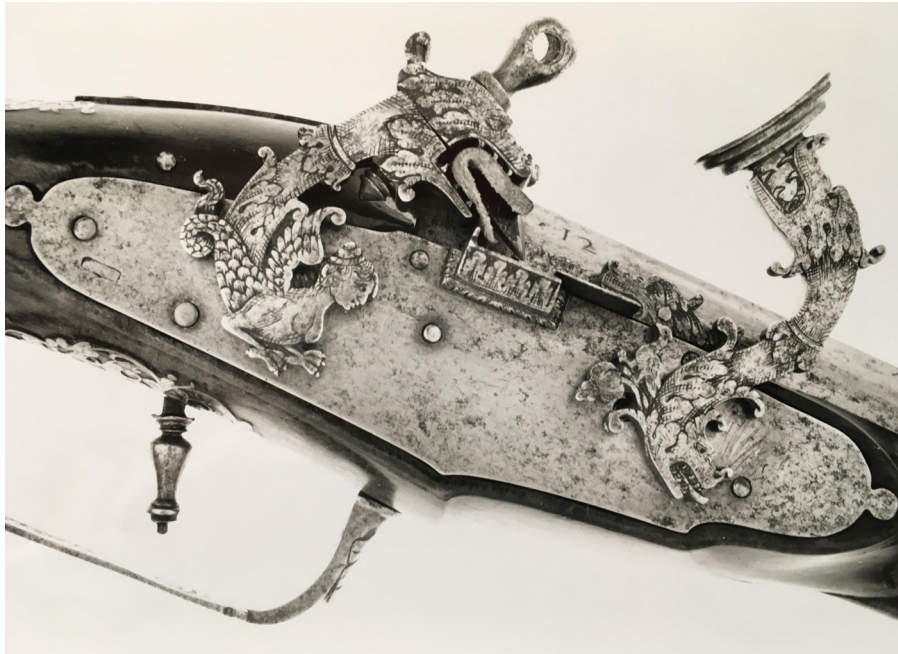
The flintlock mechanism ignites gunpowder by imitating mechanically the act of striking sparks from a domestic fire-steel. A flint is clamped in the vice-like jaws of a cock (so-called from its pecking motion) which, when the trigger is pulled, snaps forward causing the flint to strike a pivoted fire-steel, the resultant sparks igniting priming powder in a metal trough known as the flashpan. To

prevent spillage, a flashpan-cover is provided which may be a separate (usually automatically-opening) element, or else combined in one piece with the steel - a simpler and neater arrangement. The priming powder, once ignited, fires the main charge of gunpowder in the barrel via a touch-hole at the breech.

The earliest surviving flintlocks date from the third quarter of the sixteenth century, but the word flintlock itself is first encountered in Sir James Turner's *Pallas Armata* of 1683. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries any mechanism working on the flintlock principle was known in England as a snaphaunce or snaphance, the *-hance* element being derived from the Dutch word *'haan'*, meaning "cock". The earliest known use of the word is in a letter written by Queen Elizabeth I's agent in Scotland, Henry Killigrew, to Lord Burghley on 19th August, 1575.

An alternative mechanism employed during the same period was the wheellock, the sparks being generated by means of a spring-driven steel wheel rotating against a piece of iron pyrites (iron disulphide). Such mechanisms were known in England as firelocks.

During the eighteenth century the term snaphaunce fell into disuse and wheellocks were considered obsolete outside the German-speaking world. Firelock now replaced the discarded snaphaunce as a word denoting a flintlock firearm. Early nineteenth-century antiquaries were misled by this. They assumed that firelock, as it appeared in seventeenth-century documents, referred not to the wheellock, but to the "modern" flintlock. Since both firelocks and snaphaunces are mentioned in these accounts, Samuel Meyrick, writing in 1829 (*Archaeologia*, XII, p. 78), concluded that: "The Snaphaunce was a near approach to the fire-lock, but evidently not the same...." Thomas Fosbroke in his 1824 *Encyclopaedia of Antiquities* (p. 828) was more definite: "The snap-haunce differed from the modern fire-lock, in the hammer (i.e. the steel) not forming the covering of the pan." This confusion of nomenclature proved enduring; flintlocks in



The lock of a snaphaunce pistol; Italian (Brescia), ca. 1645-50.

which the flashpan-cover and steel form a single unit are called flintlocks, whilst the archaic word snaphaunce is now applied to those (generally earlier) mechanisms in which the pan-cover and steel are separate entities. The term firelock is no longer used at all.

Definitely a snaphaunce, the Pitt Rivers pistol (PRM 1884.27.76) is a fine and characterful North Italian product of circa. 1645-50;

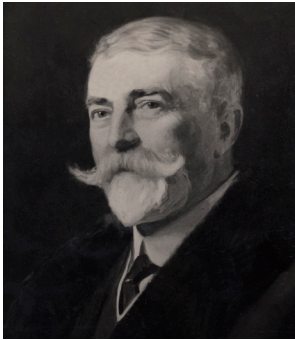
its pair is in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples (no. 3247). The barrel is signed: GIO. BATT. FRANCI. for Giovan Battista Francino, the second of five successive family members of that name who worked in the barrel-making town of Gardone Val Trompia, ten miles north of the Lombard city of Brescia - the major Italian centre for firearms production. The inner surface of the lockplate is struck with a maker's mark of a dragon, clearly inspired by the Visconti coat of arms; this might suggest a link with Milan, or alternatively a gunmaker named Visconti. The lozenge-shaped lockplate and lace-like pierced and engraved decoration of the iron mounts are characteristic mid-seventeenth-century Brescian features; its extreme length of 29 inches is unusual for an Italian pistol of this date. Snaphaunce firearms of anachronistic design continued to be made in Central Italy, notably Anghiari in Tuscany, until well into the nineteenth century.

Michael Spencer, Friend



The lock of a snaphaunce pistol; Italian (Brescia), ca. 1645-50. Photo taken from the other side.

Frank Bowden, the Raleigh Bicycle Company and Cycling for Health



Portrait of Sir Frank Bowden aged 70, Nottinghamshire Archives reference DDRN 6-20-3

job with the principal law officer in Hong Kong. With his employer's approval, he made a personal fortune 'on the side' as a speculator in real estate and the stock market.

By the time he was 30, Frank Bowden was a financially secure self-made man. His finances were healthy, but his body, after eight years in the humid sub-tropical climate of Hong Kong, was not. So he moved to the benign Mediterranean climate of San Francisco, married Amelia Houston and started a family. A few years later they moved to London, but in 1885 Frank was taken seriously ill. He therefore visited the Yorkshire spa town of Harrogate, in the hope that a 'course of the waters' might help improve his condition. He consulted the well-respected Dr Ward who suggested that he should take up cycling. Frank therefore bought a tricycle and rode it during the winter of 1886-7 in south-east France. By the spring his health had improved so much that he was able to average 40 to 45 miles a day.

On returning to London from France, Frank Bowden decided to make the transition from a tricycle to a bicycle. He bought a Raleigh, which struck him as being superior to all the others he had seen, and toured extensively on it in France, Italy and England during 1887 and 1888.

In autumn 1888 Frank Bowden decided to visit the Raleigh works with a view to buying another bike. He ended up buying half the company and soon he and his family controlled it completely. By 1913 he was able to claim that Raleigh had the highest output of any cycle maker in the world. In that same year he published a book entitled 'Cycling for Health'.

The book was a useful manual for cyclists and potential cyclists. It included advice on rising and shining, eating and drinking, and clothing. Frank stressed that:

"It is only by constant attention to details, and persistence for several weeks, and in some cases months, in steady cycling, that chronic complaints can be cured, and then you

The classic Rover safety bicycle was launched in 1885 and in that same year a pair of mechanics set up a small bicycle-making enterprise in Nottingham. The workshop was in Raleigh Street, so they adopted the brand name Raleigh.

Frank Bowden was born in Exeter in 1848 and raised in Bristol. As a young man he beat more than 100 applicants for a

will become a confirmed, instead of an infirm cyclist, and your friends, like mine, will truly assure you that they are astonished to find the years roll lightly by leaving you looking healthier and more robust than ever, with a still greater joy in your steed of steel and the open road."

The First World War broke out soon after Frank's book was published and most of Raleigh's production capacity was turned over to munitions work for the government. In 1915, in recognition of his contribution to the war effort, he was awarded a baronetcy. Sir Frank was taken ill while holidaying near Lisbon in 1921. He returned to England and died of heart failure at his home, Bestwood Lodge, near Nottingham.

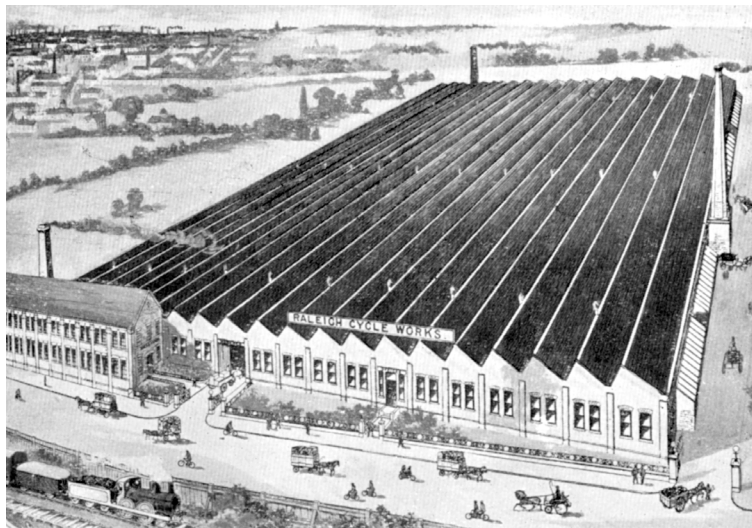
If it were not for Frank Bowden heeding Dr Ward's advice to take up cycling, Raleigh might never have become one of the greatest names in cycle manufacture. Reporting Frank's death, 'Bicycling News' wrote: "So far as the cycle trade is concerned, we cannot call to mind any man who attained his position in quite so unorthodox a manner."

Tony Hadland,

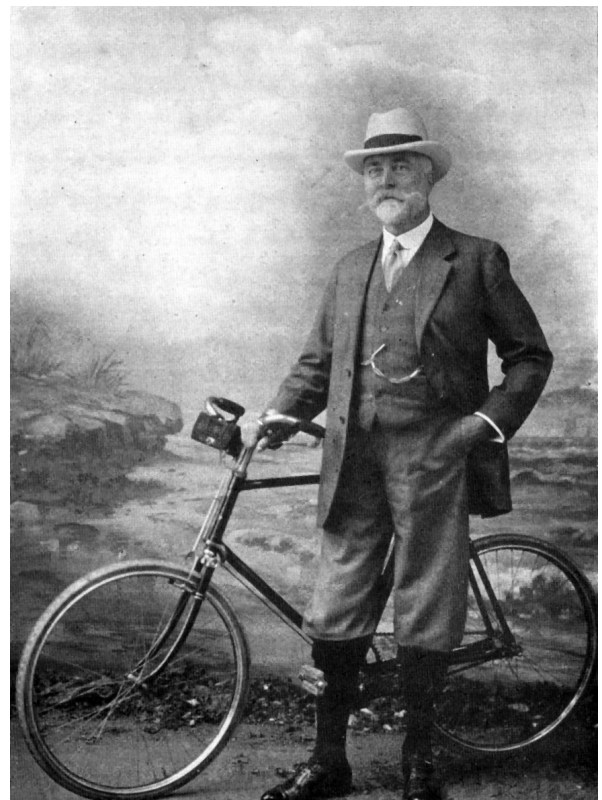
a cycle historian and

author of the book 'Raleigh:

Past and Presence of an iconic Bicycle Brand'.



Bird's eye view of the Raleigh factory as built in 1897, from a 1903 Raleigh catalogue.



Frank Bowden with a Raleigh bicycle, from 'Cycling for Health', Criterion press, 1913.

The Coconut

The coconut, *Cocos nucifera*, has been around for a while, rather longer in fact than *Homo sapiens*. Researchers put its beginnings in the Eocene period putting it on the planet with dormice, rhinoceroses, and delicate lilies. During its 35 million year history it has contributed to the lives of humans in more ways than any other plant. And with one notable exception, its influence has been entirely benign.

Early sea-farers were the first to benefit from its pure water and its nutritious flesh, both of which they used to supplement restricted on-board supplies. Captain Bligh took coconuts on *The Bounty* and the filching of his private supply led to the mutiny. So enamoured was Bligh of coconuts that he made sure there were plenty on *The Bounty's* launch when he and his 18 loyal sailors were cast adrift by Fletcher Christian into the open sea. Bligh used the coconut's sterile water and white flesh to feed his men on their 4000 mile journey to safety.



Capt. Bligh is cast adrift from the *Bounty* (Robert Dodd 1790)

A century later, a research chemist at Queen's University in Belfast made what proved to be a discovery of monumental importance. John Hunter found that powdered coconut charcoal, formed by burning the nut's shell, had extraordinary powers of gaseous adsorption. When a Polish scientist Raphael Ostrejko went a step further and ran steam at high temperatures through the powdered charcoal to activate it, its powers of adsorption increased by 100%. 36 million gas masks had been distributed throughout England when war broke out in 1939. They all had coconut charcoal in their filters.

Today, researchers in France trying to create nuclear energy through fusion use coconut charcoal in the pumps that create the vacuum necessary for fusion to take place: the extraneous gases are adsorbed by the charcoal. Here at home, ambulances carry coconut charcoal as a first response in overdose cases: the unwanted ingested



An early Lever Bros advertisement for Sunlight soap circa 1900

substances (commonly drugs) are adsorbed onto the surface of the charcoal and passed through the system. In China, this activated coconut charcoal is stuffed into supercapacitors which power the country's electric buses.

While Hunter was experimenting with coconut charcoal in Belfast, a Bolton businessman was experimenting with the nuts' oil. William Lever was making soap at the end of the nineteenth century - a better soap made not with animal fats, but with the oil from coconuts. Lever Bros became Britain's leading soap manufacturer and then branched out using the coconut oil to make margarine. In 1929 Lever Brothers merged with Margarine Unie of the Netherlands to form Unilever. The consumer products giant is today worth US\$220 billion - and all made

on the back of the coconut.

The exception to these benign uses of the coconut was developed in America at Harvard University. It was 1942



Coconut picker Bali, Indonesia.

Photo: © Robin Laurance

and an organic chemist in his forties, Professor Louis Fieser, was working on a top-secret project for the US Department of Defence. The generals wanted an incendiary device that would create and spread fire. Fieser used the acids in coconut oil. He mixed these with naphthenic acid, added the mixture to gasoline and called the fire department in neighbouring Cambridge.

He would test his new chemical combination in a pit behind the Business School. It was Valentine's Day 1942. With the help of colleagues, he rolled their napalm bomb out of the lab and into the pit next to the busy tennis courts. Nobody took much notice. Fieser withdrew a safe distance, pulled the switch on the detonator cable and in a mighty ball of fire, America had the makings of its first napalm bomb. The fire-bombing of Tokyo was not the coconut's finest hour.

Robin Laurance, Friend

A Brief History of Circus



Flyer for Philip Astley's Circus

Surprisingly, circus did not originate in ancient Rome. The Roman circus was an arena used for races and competitive activities. Circus, the performance form, started in England.

The modern term was coined by Philip Astley (1742-1814), a former cavalry officer. In 1768, he established a permanent show in London displaying feats of horsemanship in a ring-shaped arena in Waterloo that he called his 'circus'.

'Hippodramas' (theatrical dramas, in which horses played the main characters), were popular and many used a ring format. This allowed audiences to keep sight of riders during performances and made it possible, through centrifugal force, for the riders to keep their balance while standing on the galloping horses.

Philip Astley decided to expand. He introduced additional acts to his equestrian displays: acrobats, rope dancers and jugglers, as well as a character borrowed from Elizabethan theatre: the clown. The clown and his team would fill the pauses between acts with burlesques of tumbling and tricks. Astley's circus was a huge success, becoming a form of entertainment that over the following 250 years would span the globe.

Rival circuses opened and the form went international. In 1782, Astley opened Paris's first circus, the Amphithéâtre Anglois. John Hughes' circus company travelled to Russia in 1793 to perform at the court of Catherine the Great, and in 1797, British equestrian John Ricketts opened the first circuses in Canada and in the United States.

Soon every major European city, and many in North America, had a grand, permanent building for circus performances. However, in the US the format was changing. The country was vast, with few cities and a dispersed population. To reach their public, showmen needed to travel. In 1825, circus entrepreneur Joshua Purdey Brown came up with the tented ring, a temporary wood and canvas construction that could be put up and taken down to move from location to location.

Show content changed too. A New York State cattle dealer, Hachaliah Bailey, had purchased a young African elephant, which he exhibited around the country with great success. It was a natural development for his and other menagerie shows to combine with circuses. So, the American circus emerged: a travelling tent-show, including wild animals and run by businessmen, unlike circuses in

Europe, which were mainly owned and run by performing families.

In the nineteenth century circus became big business, and the most popular form of entertainment in America. It was propelled by two innovations introduced by circus entrepreneur P.T Barnum. His extra rings for 'sideshows' with multiple simultaneous displays attracted bigger audiences. And his new system of rail transportation on specially constructed rolling stock enabled circuses to travel the country's rail network.

In Britain too, hundreds of travelling tent circuses, usually including exotic animals, had appeared. British and European circus owners began to have global ambitions. Unconstrained by the barrier of language, circus was an easily exportable performance form and circuses crossed continents and oceans. Italian showman 'Giuseppe Chiarini', for example, toured South America, the Pacific, China and India with his circus for over forty years, from 1853 to 1897.

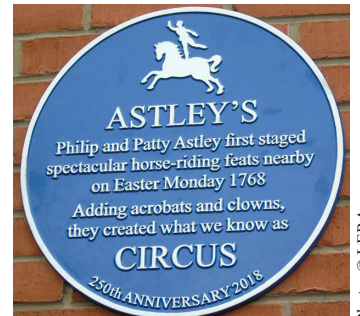
After World War 1, audience tastes changed: tight rope and trapeze performances were increasingly popular; international artists came to join British circuses, while the traditional equestrian turns were relegated to supporting roles.

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, circuses waned. However, in the 1980s an exciting 'New Circus' movement emerged, championing artistic creativity and innovation. The globally successful Canadian 'Cirque du Soleil' and the French 'Archaos', and others, now stage spectacular shows without animals, focusing on conveying a dramatic story, using acrobatics, juggling, clowning and trapeze, with special lighting effects and original music.

Dorothy Walker, Friend



Model of early C20 American circus (Ringling circus museum, Florida)



The blue plaque installed in Cornwell Road, Southwark in 2018 at the instigation of the Lambeth Residents' Association to commemorate Phillip Astley's first 'circus' performance.

Photo: © LERA

Photo: © Dorothy Walker

The Black Spartacus of Saint-Domingue

Toussaint Louverture was the spearhead of the Haitian revolution, an uprising which began in 1791 with a slave revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, and culminated in the proclamation of the world's first independent black Republic in 1804. Although Toussaint did not live to witness this climax, he decisively shaped the course of the revolution: after the abolition of slavery in 1793, he became the leader of the colony's 500 000, black people, the commander of its republican army, and eventually its governor. In 1801 he promulgated an autonomist Constitution in which slavery was ruled out

"forever". Treacherously captured by Napoleon's invading army a year later, and imprisoned in a French fort, he ended his days as the revolution's most eminent martyr, mourned in Wordsworth's elegiac poem 'To Toussaint L'Ouverture.'

Writing the biography of Toussaint was a fabulous (if daunting) project. (1) He confronted the mighty forces of his age – slavery, settler colonialism, imperial domination, racial hierarchy, and European cultural supremacy – and bent them to his implacable will. As the world's first black superhero, he defied convention: as a slave who achieved emancipation, as a black man who ascended to supreme power, and as a great captain whose triumphs against French, Spanish and British troops subverted existing martial norms. Yet he was wonderfully enigmatic, and since the early 19th century his biographers have painted him in diametrically opposing ways. For his admirers, he was a progressive who brought enlightenment to Saint-Domingue (hence CLR James' still classic *'Black Jacobins'*), and anticipated the anticolonial revolutions of the modern era. For his critics, he was a tyrant who brutalised his black and mixed-race brethren, cynically betrayed the Revolution by allying himself with white settlers, and visited disaster upon the colony by impertinently challenging French rule.

I am very much with the admirers. But they have underestimated Toussaint by portraying him as a mere disciple of European philosophical rationalism. He was a much more excitingly polyphonic figure, who combined French republican values with a range of African and Caribbean influences. This *'métissage'* shines through in the book's organising concept, the ideal of fraternity. Toussaint and his



Portrait of Toussaint Louverture, by Edouard Duval Carrié (see p2)

black revolutionaries invented an original version of brotherhood: it wove together, in a magnificent tapestry, Enlightenment thinking, Saint-Domingue's syncretic Catholicism, elements of runaway *marron* slave culture, as well as African royalism and Caribbean spirituality (notably the emerging *vodou* religion). His was also a more comprehensive rendering of fraternity, fully embracing the principle of racial equality. Brotherhood underlay every aspect of Toussaint's world-view, from his private qualities of compassion and generosity to his practice of military

virtue, his vision of black unity, his religious and spiritual norms, his civic coalition-building, and his utter dedication to preventing European imperialists from reimposing slavery in Saint-Domingue. After his death Toussaint was idolised by slaves all over the Atlantic; his legend was acclaimed by Cuban rebels, Irish republicans and Maori tribes; Toussaint was especially celebrated by advocates of African-American civil and political rights in the United States, from Frederick Douglass onwards. Paul Robeson later called Ho Chi Minh the "Toussaint Louverture of Vietnam".

Toussaint Louverture was a shooting star in the tropical firmament: a charismatic ruler full of pride, energy, and playfulness, driven by a strong sense of duty and honour, and extraordinary capacity for forgiveness. Despite the gruesome exactions perpetrated upon his people by generations of white and mixed-race slave-owners, he genuinely believed that a multi-racial Republic could be created in Saint-Domingue, in which all citizens lived on an equal footing. The path of European imperialism might taken a very different turn had his generously optimistic vision "*doucement allé loin*", as he used to say, been allowed to flourish. At a time when the global history of Atlantic slavery is being recovered, and the legacies of colonialism discussed widely across our societies, Toussaint's humanist ideals of equality and racial justice remain especially pertinent.

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1. *Black Spartacus: the epic life of Toussaint Louverture*, London, Allen Lane, 2020.

The Controversy of the Nude

Why has nakedness been so troubling a condition in so many ways for so many people in so many places and for so very long? If you're inclined to think otherwise, stop and consider these recent episodes. In 2016 the Capitoline Museum in Rome boxed up its classical nude statuary to accommodate the sensibilities of the visiting Iranian President. That same year Facebook banned the iconic photograph of a young Vietnamese child fleeing napalm bombs because this searing world-famous 1972 image violated its nudity policy. Last year, the black British model Nyome Nicholas-Williams successfully fought Instagram, calling out the social media platform for permitting shots of naked thin white women but prohibiting images of plus-size and/or black naked women. Instagram responded that the image removal was due to its algorithm misinterpreting the model's pose, and went on to amend its policy.

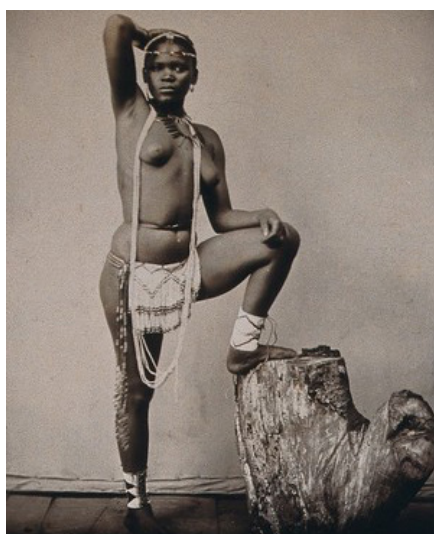
Nicholas-Williams' campaign underscored an important element of both contemporary and historical attitudes to the naked human body, the racial divide that, in one way or another, has so often determined what and indeed who could and could not be seen. Interestingly, between the nineteenth and the early twenty-first centuries, what has become acceptable for display has radically changed. There were, of course, exceptions: missionaries, horrified by the nakedness of those they hoped to convert to Christianity, made clothing one of their earliest endeavours. But while the servants of God saw it as their duty to conceal bodies, scientists argued that studying nakedness would unlock the secrets of the human body. In 1869 Thomas Henry Huxley informed the Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, that he was compiling a photographic record of races living under the imperial British flag and that he needed photos of such peoples "in



Figure 1. George Smith's anthropometric photograph of an unknown Samoan man, 1873.
photographs.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/1998 236 25



Figure 2. Carte-de-visite, Bowman & Co., Pietermaritzburg, Southern Africa, c. 1865.
photographs.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/1998 67



a condition of absolute nudity." Granville was happy to comply with the eminent scientist's request and asked colonial governors to furnish such materials. Such images quickly became central to the work of ethnologists and anthropologists.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the rich ethnological holdings of the PRM are replete with such images. Explorers, anthropologists, colonial officials and travellers all avidly collected images of this sort and regarded them as scientifically important. In figure 1, a Samoan man is posed against a measuring device intended to facilitate comparative work; it's unusual in that he was permitted to conceal his pubic region. Commercial photographers quickly picked up on the broader marketability of such images. Postcards and cartes-de-visite displaying people of colour were freely and cheaply available. Figure 2, from the mid-1860s, was typical of those that collectors enthusiastically pasted into their photo albums. Equally popular were pictures of bare-breasted women of colour frequently sold as postcards: figure 3, captioned "Kaffir Lady", dates from the 1890s.

Exposure of black – colonised, enslaved – bodies was routine. When London bookseller Mr. Phillpott was charged in 1879 for the "indecent display" in his shop window, his solicitor insisted that the scantily-clad Zulu people in the images were dressed in their standard attire. He acknowledged that had English men and women been depicted in a similar fashion, the photographs would be "indecent". The belief that allegedly 'primitive' peoples were recognisable by their nakedness offered wide latitude not permitted the 'civilised' for whom concealing clothing was the very definition of respectability. Nakedness as emblematic of the colonised, savage state prefaced, justified and defined colonial rule.

Instagram's algorithm, deliberately or not, may have reversed the contours of respectability but, whether at the height of the Victorian era or in the early decades of the twenty-first century, qualms about the naked human continue to trouble us unduly – and the potent myth of racial difference is never far from the surface.

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Figure 3. South African woman in a beaded costume. 1896. Marked as 'Kaffir Lady'. Sir Hercules Robinson. Wellcome library No 536583i

Photo: © PRM

Photo: © PRM

Photo: © Wellcome Library

INFORMATION SHEET

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MUSEUM DIARY DATES

As we go to print the PRM is open
to the public from 17 May.

To ensure safety of visitors and staff,
entry will be ticketed and a reduced
capacity to meet the 2 metre rule.
Please plan your visit by booking a
pre-timed ticket online. Visitors will be
asked to wear masks and directed to
hand gel points in the museum. While
it will be a little different the staff at the
museum are working to ensure you
have a pleasant experience. Due to
restrictions, the upper floors may not be
open but the Ground Floor will be open
to visitors.

Exhibitions and case displays

Located throughout the galleries

Losing Venus:

Installations by
artist Matt Smith
highlights the
colonial impact on
LGBTQ+ lives across
the British Empire.



The Cook service by Matt Smith

Photo: © Matt Smith

Past Exhibitions online

Intrepid Women: Fieldwork in Action 1910-1957.

A focus on 6 of the
most important
female collectors and
their field work.



Warrior with Sally the cat.
Papua New Guinea

Photo: © PRM

PRM Website

Virtual Tour

Weaving Connections:

An online exhibition from the Jenny Balfour-
Paul collection with perspectives of Multaka
volunteers.



Womens thob. (2018.37.18) PRM

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FRIENDS' DIARY DATES

The PRM website brings an informative
online discussion to your home.
Register with the PRM

The project *TAKING CARE* explores the
connections between ethnographic
collections and questions regarding
the climate crisis, the Anthropocene
and issues related to the afterlives of
colonialism.

Thursday 6 May, 9.00 - 10.15 In conversation with Cissy Serrao

In the fourth week of the 'Matters
of Care: Museum Futures in Times of
Planetary Precarity' Conference series,
we talk with Cissy Serrao, founder of
Poakalani & Company, Hawai'i. Cissy
and her family have been creating
Hawaiian quilts for many generations

'The Art of Hawaiian Quilting'

Wednesday 12 May, 14.00 - 15.15 In conversation with Subhadra

In the fifth week of the 'Matters of Care:
Museum Futures in Times of Planetary
Precarity' Conference series, keynote
speaker Subhadra Das asks us the
fundamental question "What is a
Museum For?" In conversation with
Marenka Thompson-Odlum, Subhadra
asks us to question our museums,
collections and stories that we tell.

*'Taking Care of Business: What is a
Museum For?'*

Thursday 20 May, 9.00 - 10.15 In conversation with Naman Ahuja

In the final week of the 'Matters of
Care: Museum Futures in Times of
Planetary Precarity' Conference series,
keynote speaker Naman Ahuja will
share thoughts on the decolonisation
of museums, the globalisation of
art history and issues around the
showcasing of difference and the
inability to translate one culture into
the language of another. He will
discuss the complexities of taking
ideas of a universal museum and
global art history to a non-western
audience in conversation with Clare
Harris.

*'From India IN the World to India AND
the World'*