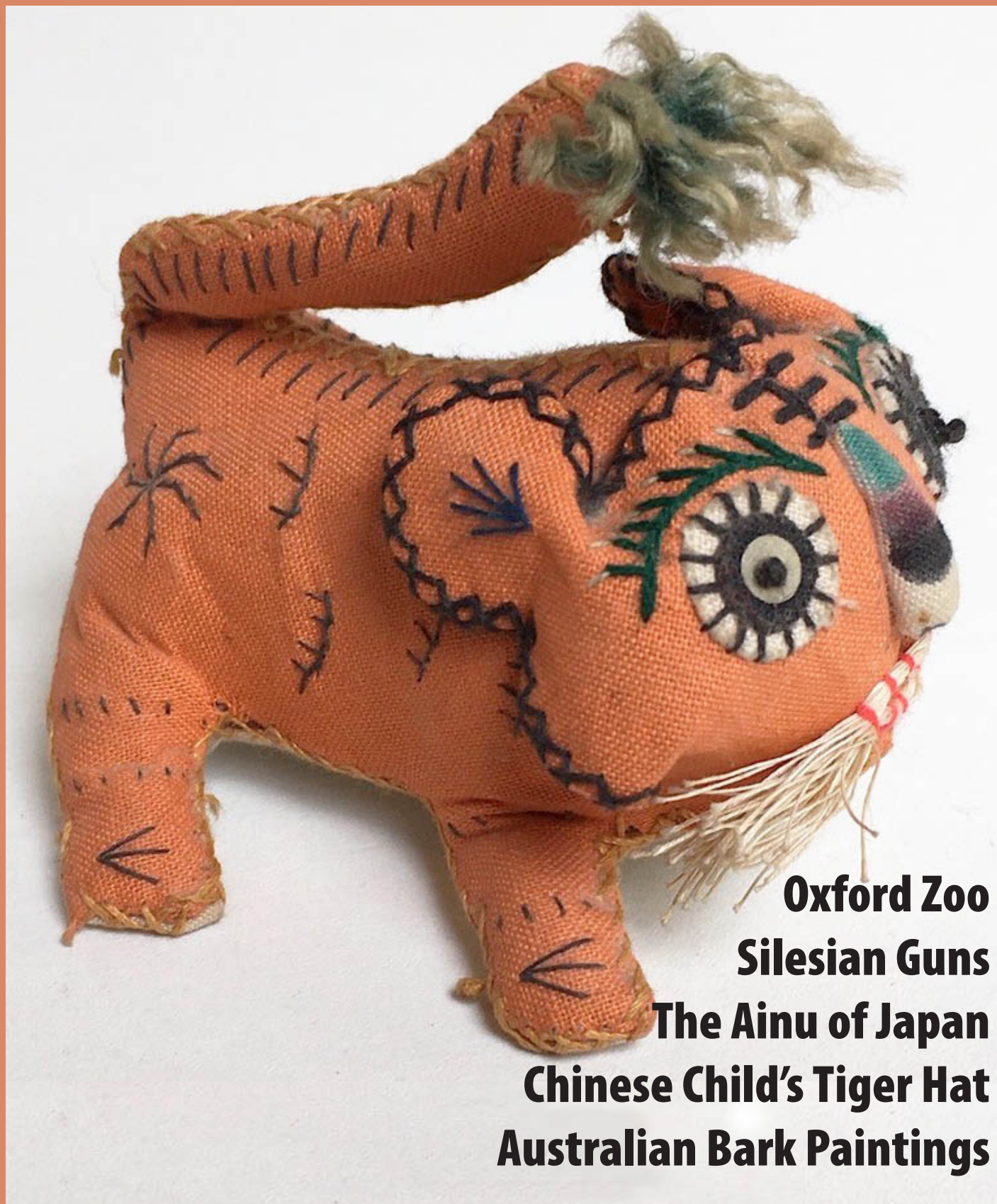


# The Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford Magazine



**Oxford Zoo**  
**Silesian Guns**  
**The Ainu of Japan**  
**Chinese Child's Tiger Hat**  
**Australian Bark Paintings**

SOUTH PARKS ROAD, OXFORD, OX1 3PP

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**Cover image:** Tiger toy 8 cm long, bought in the 1980s from a Hong Kong shop. Photo © Felicity Wood. See article on page 11.

To describe the period since our last Magazine issue as odd is an understatement. Since my last 'Between Friends' note, the Covid-19-related difficulties seem longer-term than we were psychologically ready to face up to then. Disappointments for future plans were inevitable, and events that were postponed until the autumn have now receded further into the future. This includes the Kenneth Kirkwood day, which is now timetabled for March next year.

I wrote that the AGM would have to be cancelled, but in fact we held it at the advertised time by Zoom, thanks to Suzanne Attree, PRM Senior Development Executive. It was preceded by an illuminating talk and Powerpoint presentation from our Director, Laura van Broekhoven, about the future of the PRM. There were more people "there" than at last year's face-to-face AGM and it was a special joy to see a Friend who joined us from the USA. This gave me the idea of asking Suzi, Laura and our Events Co-ordinator, Juliet Eccles, whether we could "zoom" some of our future talks and the idea was taken up with enthusiasm. Nothing has been definitively fixed yet, and some of the booked speakers are currently on furlough, but the possibility is being actively explored and it would be ideal for out-of-town members.

I reported at the AGM on the problems of finding volunteers to take on the roles of running the Friends as an organisation. A different model to ensure our survival now seems inevitable and we are coming around to the view that we need to set up a greater degree of integration between the PRM and the Friends. If this were done, some of the administration and fund-raising could be handled by the Museum while members would continue to organise talks and produce our magazine.

**Gillian Morriss-Kay**, Chair of the Friends



Photo © Studio Edmark

## Editorial



Photo © Dawn Osborne

So we are suddenly in a not so brave new world! Luckily as I am a London resident we had already taken steps last year to make time and fiscal efficiencies in the editorial process of this Magazine since the rest of the Editorial Committee live in Oxford. Accordingly by the time Covid 19 hit we were already having our regular editorial meetings by Skype and were managing the proofing and

design processes all on a virtual basis. We, therefore, managed to get the last Issue 98 out on time as usual even though it was prepared and released at the height of the first wave of the pandemic. Additionally, in case members are nervous about receiving a hard copy magazine, we are also currently making the magazine available on the Museum web site shortly after publication, instead of a few months later, so access is as easy as possible. We hope that as most of you stay at home you are able to enjoy a little slice of world culture even if you are not free to go

anywhere in person. Once again as I write we are on target to get this Issue 99 out to you in a timely and seamless fashion. Thanks to all contributors and my editorial, design and distribution team for making this possible!

**Dawn Osborne**, Editor

## New Friends

**New Friends:** Roger Ali, Peterborough, Dr. Don Porcelli and Dr. Liz Wilding, 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](mailto:rhking17@gmail.com) or **01367 242433**. Please note: Subscriptions were raised to the current rates, which are listed on our website and in the magazine, on May 1st, 2018. All Friends were notified of this increase by letter in January, 2018. Friends who have still not raised their payment accordingly are in breach of the Constitution. Please check what you should be paying. **Rosemary King**, Membership Secretary.



# From the Director

As you can imagine, this is a challenging time for everyone involved in museums. We have had to close the Museum and simultaneously undergo a very speedy adaptation to working remotely, setting up office at home, sharing our tea and baking in virtual spaces. Microsoft Teams has been a life-saver for all of those working through the pandemic and has ensured that we can still feel a sense of connectivity and togetherness. It has been extraordinary to see the resulting brilliant buzz of creativity and share it online with all our audiences.

Although we will reopen in September visits to the Pitt Rivers Museum this summer will only be possible by a virtual visit if you go to <https://tinyurl.com/prm-tour>. This enthralling dollhouse view of the Museum has even ended up as the number 1 among virtual museum visits in several top-lists. You can also see more of the buzz of work still going on behind the scenes through our Twitter site (@Pitt\_Rivers).

Many of our staff are now on furlough leave, a difficult decision made easier by the generous way in which Oxford

University has implemented the process. Alongside the turmoil and sadness, the pandemic is bringing a new awareness of what we value in life and the urgency of the Black Lives Matter Movement has made us even more acutely aware of the importance of social justice being at the core of all that we do. What truly matters: equity, care, solidarity, art, music, poetry and neighbourly support, and the need for transforming the Museum so that it can truly contribute to becoming an anti-racist society. We will actively be part of this new reality as we plan for the future.

As part of our mission to remain sustainable and to enable the Museum to create innovative projects to react and adapt to a new environment, we will be approaching our supporters soon with a proposal for support for the Museum, according to individual means, as part of a new Director's Fund. We suggest that this fund be used to support the most pressing needs of the Museum while we continue to develop innovative approaches that are catered to our new reality. I look forward to speaking to all of you about this new initiative.

**Laura van Broekhoven, Director**



*Dollhouse view of the museum*

Photo © PRM

## Museum News

As a result of the current pandemic, we have had to pause specific projects, including the large move of Museum objects (which thankfully is now picking up again), and our work with forced migrants through *Multaka*. We have also had to postpone the opening of our exhibition co-curated with LGBTQ+ communities through '*Beyond the Binary*', and the Clothworkers' funded '*What's in our Drawers*' project which has already transformed 56 drawers in the main galleries. Other projects such as '*Labelling Matters*' and our work with school refusers through '*Kick Arts*' are also affected. Scheduled exhibitions have been postponed, and school bookings and room hires cancelled or postponed. This will have a significant impact on the Museum and its finances.

Being away from the Museum has impacted on us in many ways and is teaching us important lessons as to what we do next as a museum and how we improve our ways of delivering learning, exhibitions and tours. We particularly

need to develop digital material for different audiences so, behind the scenes, and as a start, we are integrating all our databases so that they will become easily searchable from across the world.

We are making good progress in developing our new plan for developing the Museum's audiences. Given that audiences are at the core of what we do, we are hoping that it will cater to all of them in innovative ways with a focus on co-creation, co-production, inclusivity and self-determination. We are adapting and planning new programmes that will allow visitors to think differently and consider stories from different philosophical viewpoints. We look forward to implementing our new ideas when the Museum reopens.

**Karrine Sanders,**  
*Head of Administration, Planning and Finance*

# Traces of the Past/Losing Venus Exhibitions

## Traces of the Past

This year is the 25th anniversary of the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda, which claimed more than one million lives. 'Traces of the Past' is an exhibition that focuses on objects that still give meaning to survivors who are now living in the UK. These objects, examples of which are shown, are their memories, evoking people who were slaughtered and a way of life that was lost. On the one hand, they recall a time of laughter and happiness, on the other, the dreadful events of a genocide and the consequent loss of people and their way of life. Immediacy is added to the exhibition

through recordings of the words of these survivors. As they say: "we survived for a reason" and "we survived to talk".

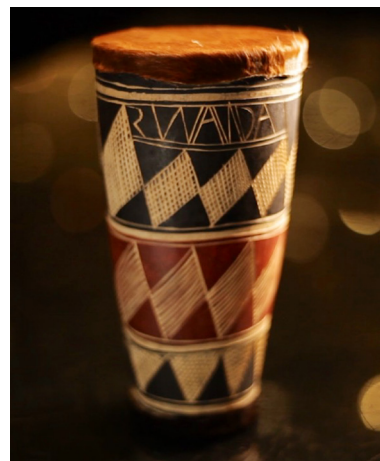
Carita Umulisa says that the milk container pictured belonged to her murdered father, Augustin Ndayambaje, a farmer who loved his cows.

Angelique Ndamukunda owns the drum 'Ingoma' and recalls that it "reminds me of my three best friends at secondary school that I lost. They introduced me to a traditional dance class. I liked dancing to traditional songs, but didn't know how to dance. Ingoma reminds me that they teased and told me to just follow the drum rhythm."

The Mancala board game 'Igisoro', belongs to Marie Chantal Uwamahoro who says that "Igisoro reminds me

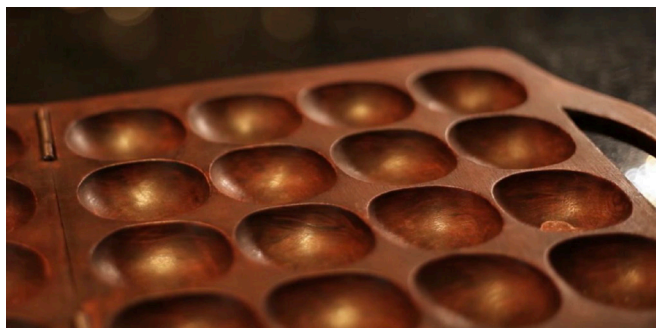


A Rwandan milk container



A Rwandan drum (Ingoma)

of my childhood with my family. Growing up in a family of eight children, we used to gather outside in the compound and play board games. Igisoro brings some memories of watching my father and mother playing games with my siblings and having some laughter. The game reminds me of what I once had and lost, my brothers, sisters and a father."



The wooden, cupped board (Igisoro) for the Mancala board game

## Losing Venus

The 'Losing Venus' exhibition is very different: it consists of a series of installations that takes as its theme the effect of the British Empire on LGBTQ people. Matt Smith, the artist and ceramicist who works with museum collections and produced this exhibition, writes: "With the 250th anniversary of Cook's voyage to Australia, we have an opportunity to review the relationship between the northern and southern hemisphere and question long-held views of progress and enlightenment, especially where they impact on the ways in which people are allowed to live and love."

From 1860 onwards, the British Empire criminalized male-to-male sexual relations, imposing lengthy prison sentences. The legacy of these legal codes lives on in some 38 countries that were once subject to British colonial rule.

'Losing Venus' is an exhibition that uses this history to consider the meaning of such discrimination today, doing so through the lens of sexual identity and gender fluidity. The fact that it is displayed in a British cultural centre, not only gives it extra resonance, but also reflects the intention of the Pitt Rivers Museum to be a space in which many histories are told, even the difficult ones.

This striking and thoughtful exhibition is spread across the ground floor and includes screen prints and objects from the Museum that reflect gender fluidity, together with striking objects made by Matt. Two are shown here. The first directly follows the Empire theme and is a plate from his recreation of a lost dinner service commissioned by Cook on his return home: it visually explores the distortions that occur when non-European discoveries are translated into European forms. The second points to the universality of oppression and is a striking symbol of a repressed black woman entitled "The Dolls: Iran".

These are both thoughtful and interesting exhibitions about important topics – do not miss them when the PRM reopens in September.

**Jonathan Bard, Friend**



An earthenware plate made by Matt Smith recreating the memory of Cook's celebratory dinner



An Iranian doll made of linen and sacking

Photo: © PRM

Photo: © PRM

All Photos: © PRM

Photo: © William Pearce

Photo: © William Pearce



# Silesian Gunmaking: The Tschinke

Teschen (Polish 'Cieszyn') is one of the oldest towns in Silesia, situated on the river Olza, a tributary of the Oder. In the sixteenth century a gunmaking industry was established there, the earliest known maker being one Jerzyk who is recorded in the years 1526-31. By around 1560-70 the Teschen gunmakers had started to produce sporting rifles intended for the shooting of sitting birds and in 1590 they formed a separate guild, together with the locksmiths, watchmakers and spurmakers. The golden age of Teschen gunmaking was the seventeenth century, the most characteristic weapon being the slender, small-calibre wheellock birding rifle known as a 'Tschinke' or 'Teschinke'.

The example in the Pitt Rivers Museum (1884.27.21) is typical of its kind and is 45½ inches long with the small calibre of 0.35 inch; it is rifled with six grooves. A pair of comparable rifles in the Livrustkammaren in Stockholm (LRK.5326 and 5327) are dated 1647 and the Pitt Rivers specimen is of about the same date. The Tschinke is characterised by three features: a rifled octagonal barrel of small bore; a wheellock firing mechanism with an external mainspring, and a so-called 'hind's foot' stock.

Rifling involves cutting a number of spiral grooves in the bore of the barrel, so as to impart to the lead bullet a spinning motion in flight and hence gyroscopic stability and greater accuracy. It was probably a German invention of the first half of the sixteenth century: the earliest surviving dated example is a barrel of 1542, incorporated into a later wheellock rifle preserved in the Tøjhusmuseet in Copenhagen (B.277).

The Tschinke lock is recognisable by its prominent external V-shaped mainspring situated behind the wheel, to which it is connected by a chain of three links. To fire the weapon, the wheel is wound up by turning it clockwise through three-quarters to seven-eighths of a turn using

a separate spanner, thereby compressing the spring. On pulling the trigger, the wheel rotates rapidly and sparks are produced by abrasion against a piece of iron pyrites, clamped in the jaws of the so-called 'dog'. Tschinke locks are constructionally archaic, the external mainspring and other details relating them to some of the earliest surviving wheellocks, in particular two guns in the Landeszeughaus in Graz (RG.2 and 3), one of which (RG.2) is dated 1527 on the barrel.

The distinctive hind's foot stock was designed to be held against the cheek when the rifle was fired. The present example is decorated with inlays of engraved bone: others have geometrical designs in stained bone and brass, suggesting a place of origin other than Silesia - perhaps Hungary, or even Russia. The classic form of Tschinke stock had emerged by the early seventeenth century, as testified to by an unusual two-shot weapon dated 1610 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (D.76). An example dated 1676 in the Mestské Múzeum in Bratislava (Z-205) is one of the latest.

The earliest recorded use of the word 'Tschinke' (as the plural 'Tschinken') is in '*Schlesiens kuriösen Denkwürdigkeiten*' ('*Silesia's Curious Memorabilia*'), published in Frankfurt in 1609. It is generally assumed to be derived from the name of the principal centre of manufacture, thus: Teschen -> Teschinke -> Tschinke. However, other types of firearm, including pistols, were also made in Teschen and these are never referred to as Tschinkes, the term being reserved for the distinctive wheellock rifles. An alternative possibility is a derivation from the Polish word 'cienki' (pronounced 'tshenki'), very appropriately meaning slender. Interestingly, the current German word 'Tesching' retains the meaning of a light, small-calibre rifle.

Michael Spencer, *Friend*

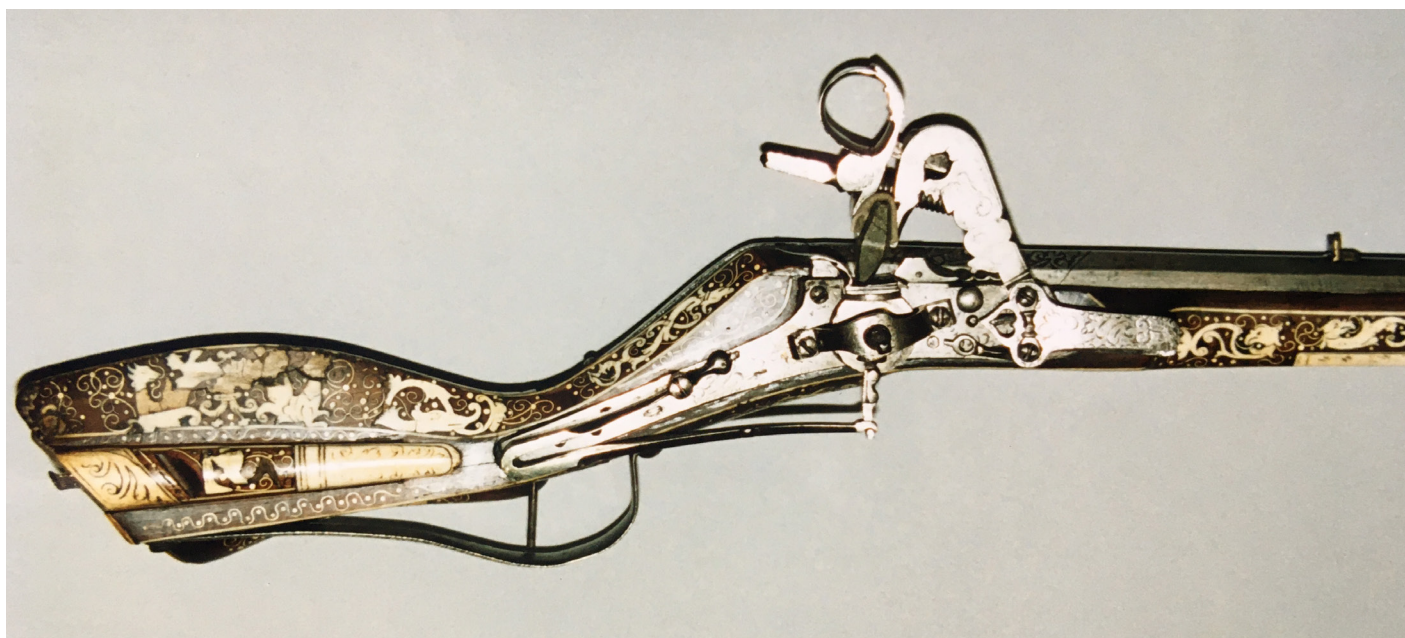


Photo © Michael Spencer

"Tschinke" rifle: Silesian (Teschen?), ca. 1645-50. PRM 1884.27.21.

# Oxford Zoo

One day in early October 2018, drivers approaching Kidlington, north of Oxford, were greeted by the view of a huge elephant striding from between the trees and across the grassy roundabout, a monkey gambolling at its feet, and a stork perched on its back. Not a real elephant of course – this was a beautiful and dramatic metal mesh sculpture created by the artist Tony Davies, commissioned by Cherwell District Council as a local history initiative commemorating the short existence of the Gosford Hill and Oxford Zoological Gardens between 1931 and 1936. The old zoo location in Kidlington is now home to Thames Valley Police HQ.

What was the story of the Oxford Zoo? During the severe global economic depression of the early 1930s, what prompted the transformation of the ancient Gosford Hill Farm into a wildly ambitious zoo venture displaying hundreds of exotic animals and birds? The story is a curious one and a reminder of how much attitudes to zoos and their role changed during the twentieth century.

The entrepreneur behind the project was Frank Gray, the new proprietor of Gosford Hill farm. An unconventional and colourful former Liberal MP for Oxford, Gray had boundless, restless energy and a keen eye for publicity. He had tried his hand in many fields, including journalism, the restaurant and laundry trades, farming, the law, a bus company, building and contracting, and setting up homes for impoverished boys. Charles Fenby in his book *'The Other Oxford'* describes how, shortly after Gray bought his farm, he decided that its position beside the northern entrance road to Oxford would be the ideal location for a striking city amenity. In his view, a Zoological Garden was just what Oxford needed.

Scores of cages, pools and enclosures were constructed in record time and his zoo opened to the public in 1931, filled with hundreds of wild animals and birds, as well as some British farm animals. An elephant, lions, a rhino, a tiger, wolves and a bear arrived soon afterwards. Visitors could buy a combined ticket for entrance and a ride on the "open-topped" bus which brought them to the zoo from the centre of Oxford. The attraction was open at weekends

in the winter and daily through the summer. Occasionally dances and firework displays were held at the old farmhouse.

The enterprise was not the commercial success that Gray may have envisioned. Neither he nor his staff had any specialist knowledge: the technical and logistical aspects of animal management and of running the zoo proved extremely challenging. In 1932, he sold the business to Captain Frank Cooper, the owner of the marmalade factory in Oxford, who appears to have had the means to run it more as a hobby than for profit.

Kidlington historian John Amor's book, *'Gosford Hill and Oxford Zoo'*, relates local memories of the zoo, including accounts of tanks of water being transported daily from the canal by Morris van to supply the animal pools, of escaped wolves, of the narrowly escaped mauling of a young tiger keeper, and, sadly, of the death, due to a foot infection, of Rosie the elephant, purchased by public subscription. Attendance figures dwindled, and in 1936, the zoo closed. Most of the animals were moved to Dudley Zoo, which still operates today.

In its amateur commercialism, the Oxford Zoo story seems far removed from modern sensitivities about the morality of keeping wild animals captive for show. Thinking has changed in the last few decades. In the 1970s, the notion of zoos as benign places of public entertainment began to be widely questioned. Astonishingly, they remained completely unregulated until 1981, when the Zoo Licensing Act was passed. In the 1990s, the actors Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers started the powerful campaigning lobby, Zoo Check.

There is increasingly vocal debate about the ethics of keeping animals in captivity in an urban setting (like Regent's Park, for example, the home of London Zoo). Although zoos such as London's operate under the banners of conservation and education, there is continuing discussion about the extent to which their operations really support these causes.

Perhaps in the future, Kidlington's statue will, like monuments everywhere, be the subject of a re-evaluation.

**Dorothy Walker, Friend**

Photo: © Dorothy Walker

Photo: © Oxfordshire History Centre

Photo: © Oxfordshire History Centre

Photo: © Oxfordshire History Centre



Elephant Sculpture



British Cattle



Rosie the Elephant



Tigress



# Westminster College - a pioneer in teacher training

Westminster College was one of the first teacher training colleges opened in England. It was established in London by the Methodist Church in 1851. In 1959 it moved to Harcourt Hill to the west of Oxford, and, in September 2019, having been part of Oxford Brookes University since 2000, the College celebrated its 60th anniversary. The celebrations focused on Westminster's move from the capital to a hilltop on the edge of Oxford.

When it opened in 1851 in an impoverished part of Westminster, the College initially trained both men and women. Students taught children who could not afford an education. It was rapidly oversubscribed and Southlands College, Battersea was founded in 1872 to accept women, whilst Westminster continued to train men. Students were offered a pioneering 4-year course, a precursor to the modern scheme of an undergraduate degree with a PGCE. From 1930, the course was validated by the University of London.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Westminster's neo-Gothic buildings were becoming outdated. Attempts were made to relocate - first Leicester was considered and later Kent. However, the plans were halted by the outbreak of war in 1939. Westminster's buildings were badly damaged during the conflict but after the war, yearning for a sense of normality, the College Trustees elected to repair them rather than move. However, by 1951, it was clear that the College was not suitable for modern education. Following a damning inspection in 1953, the Westminster Education Committee started searching for a new location and settled, this time, on Britain's oldest university city: Oxford.

John and Charles Wesley had both studied at Oxford –



Harcourt Hill Campus, Summer 2019



Westminster Training College, London, circa 1925



Official opening by Sir David Eccles, Minister for Education, 21 May 1960

the city was an appropriate choice therefore for a new Methodist teacher training college. A site on Harcourt Hill was chosen. Only 15 minutes from the city centre, it appeared ideal, with a view of the dreaming spires and an Oxford address. Although initially opposed by the local authorities, an agreement was eventually reached and 38 acres of land were purchased in March 1955. The architects Seely and Paget created a campus combining "Oxford quad with a New England look". There were subject specific classrooms and the Principal commented that he was glad that they hadn't designed "a whitewashed, geometric sculpture built from concrete".

An agreement was reached with Oxford University that the Oxford Institute of Education would validate Westminster's awards. After some initial difficulties, the relationship between the University and the College developed into a cordial one. Women were again admitted and an expansion of courses followed. The College roll grew to over 400 students, four times the number anticipated at its founding in 1851.

In 2000, Westminster College merged with Oxford Brookes University, the Harcourt Hill Campus is now home to Brookes' Schools of Education, History, Philosophy and Culture. However, the 'Westminster identity' has not been lost: the halls of residence are named after prominent Methodists, portraits of former College Principals hang in the Refectory, and the College

archives are held by the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History. The legacy of Westminster College, and its important contribution to the training of teachers, remains apparent.

**Thomas Dobson**, postgrad student studying the history of a Higher Education College in Oxford



# The Bark Paintings of Arnhem Land

## 1. Art Origins and Cultural Misunderstandings

Photo: © Australian National University



Map of Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia

The first Australians were the descendants of groups who emigrated from Africa some 65,000 years ago, arriving in northern Australia by sea around 50,000 years ago. European settlement started in the south in 1788 and only reached Arnhem Land in the late 19th century. The Europeans regarded Australia as a “land without art”; the creations we now recognise as art were only of interest to anthropologists.

The first painting illustrated here comes from Yirrkala, in the extreme north east of Arnhem Land, home of the Yolngu people. Geometric patterns covering the entire surface of the bark are common in East Arnhem Land. This relatively recent example is based on a traditional design, and tells a traditional story: the coming of fire, carried across the country by ancestral beings in the form of quails or crocodiles<sup>1</sup>.



Photo: © PRM

Bark painting by Yolngu painter Gurruwul PRM 1994.1.3

Many paintings from Groote Eylandt illustrate creation stories: the one illustrated shows a woman wandering with a star (bottom); they find the morning star, who leads them to the Earth (top panel), brings daylight and creates the sun, man and a spear for hunting<sup>2</sup>. Understanding the meaning of such paintings requires cultural knowledge or local explanation, but the early Europeans did not understand the local languages and regarded the indigenous people as savages.

Until twenty years ago, the established theory of the origin of human artistic creativity was that the emigration of

*Homo sapiens* from Africa to Europe some 45,000 years ago coincided with rapid evolutionary change in the brain and hence in cognition - the so-called “Human Revolution”. This theory was unchallenged until 20 years ago, when a new assessment of African archaeology was published<sup>3</sup>. But it was illogical in the first place - the first human occupants of Australia, ancestors of today’s artists, had clearly carried their ability to create art with them. The



Photo: © PRM

Bark painting by an artist known as Kneepad from Groote Eylandt. PRM 1967.38.1

oldest rock art in Arnhem Land has been dated to 50,000 years ago<sup>4</sup>, considerably before the European cave art of Chauvet, (30-32,000) and Lascaux (17,000).

The minds of Europeans were also closed to recognising indigenous Australian art as art because they failed to realise that it was deeply embedded in the whole culture, and had a spiritual significance that was fundamental to community life. In fact, spiritual meanings and creation stories are not only deeply imbued in the paintings, but infuse the very act of their creation. They are also expressed in ceremonies, which involve singing, dancing and body-painting with clan patterns. The Yolngu leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM explains the fundamental integration of all these aspects of the culture<sup>5</sup>:

*“It is through the ceremonies that our lives are created. These ceremonies record and pass on the laws that give us ownership of the land and of the seas, and the rules by which we live. Our ceremonial grounds are our universities, where we gain the knowledge that we need. We travel the song cycles that guide the life and the essence of the clans – keeping all in balance, giving our people their meaning. It is the only cycle of events that can ever give a Yolngu person the full energy that he or she requires for life. Without this learning, Yolngu can achieve nothing; they are nobody.”*

By the mid-20th century, the attitudes of European Australians were beginning to change. The major breakthrough came in 1957 when two anthropologists, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, curated an exhibition of bark paintings in Sydney: ‘The Art of Arnhem Land’. For the first time, individual artists were named, and identified with personal styles.



## 2. Techniques and symbolism

Bark painting is created throughout Australia, but is particularly identified with Arnhem Land, in which defined territories were bequeathed to each clan by their spirit ancestors. Although there are many different languages, the same stories, with local variations of detail and of the names of ancestral beings, are widespread. These stories are ‘*djang*’ (Kunwinjku) or ‘*wangarr*’ (Yolngu), the spiritual foundation of all aspects of the culture. The European term ‘*Dreaming*’ does not fully encapsulate it<sup>5</sup>.

The process of making a bark painting begins with a hollow cylinder of bark being cut and removed from a ‘*yárlk*’ (stringybark gum tree) in the wet season, when the sap is rising. The bark sheet is trimmed to the desired shape then dried over a fire: it is flattened by placing heavy weights on it as it cools. Traditionally, paints are derived from locally sourced natural pigments: reds, purples, pinks and yellows come from ochres (iron oxide), black mainly from charcoal and white from pipeclay. The colours are themselves regarded as having spiritual significance. They are bound with substances such as egg yolk, wax or orchid plant sap, and applied to the bark by the hands or with a variety of tools including feathers and brushes made from human hair; the tip of a blade of sedge grass is useful for making fine cross-hatching lines, ‘*rarrk*’. Today, acrylic paints, wood glue and modern brushes may be used.

In West Arnhem Land, bark paintings frequently depict animals against a plain background wash, which until the 1970s was commonly red ochre. The animals are often those

up the Bennett-Campbell non-profit Trust in 1962 to sell and promote indigenous art. The label on the back states that it was painted by Neville Darandara Naroldol of Gumadeer River, a member of the Gunwingga (Kinwinjku) people of Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), in the far west of Arnhem Land.



Bark painting of Yingarna, the Rainbow serpent, by Bilinyara Nabegeyo (c. 1920-c.1991). PRM 1982.12.1

Unusually, it has no background wash. The bodies of both mother and Joey are divided into compartments filled by simple cross-hatching. This is an archetypal image that also appears on the walls or roof of rock shelters: it has the didactic purpose of illustrating the method of butchering<sup>2</sup>. Some versions show a man throwing a spear to kill the animal: he is ‘*Mimih*’, the spirit who taught the Kunwinjku people the art of painting.

The painting of ‘*Yingarna*’, a treasure of the Pitt Rivers Museum, is by Bilinyara Nabegeyo (c.1920-c.1991), one of

the most revered artists of West Arnhem Land<sup>1</sup>. ‘*Yingarna*’ is a powerful snake-like creator spirit who lives either in water or in the sky: its tongue forks to make lightning and its body arches to form a rainbow. Accounts of its relation to water vary according to the nature of the climate in different parts of the continent. It once travelled the land, creating the hills and valleys, swallowing people and regurgitating them later to form features of the landscape.

Swallowing and regurgitation is a fundamental cultural theme: it is a metaphor for the transition from one metaphysical state to another. This is ‘*djang*’,

*“an ongoing, eternal, life-giving transformative power that accounts for every aspect of existence. It also refers to the creation ancestor, the country where spirit resides, and to ceremonial designs and songs that represent that being. It is what powers our art”*<sup>5</sup>



Bark painting by Neville Darandara Naroldol

hunted for food, including kangaroo, emu and barramundi (Asian sea bass). Just as ritual ceremonies transform the initiates into spiritual beings, the act of painting is a spiritual act that transforms the subject. The artist John Mawurndjul, a master of the *rarrk* technique, explained: “We don’t paint the actual body, but its power. We represent its power with cross-hatching, we don’t paint its human form, no. We only paint the spirit, that’s all”<sup>3</sup>. Particular designs, especially *rarrk* patterns, designate clan identity.

I acquired the kangaroo bark painting shown here at a Friends’ Christmas party silent auction in 2016; it was donated by Diana Naumann, who bought it in Darwin when she was backpacking in 1979. It was originally collected by Dorothy Bennett, an advocate for indigenous artists who set

1. Howard Morphy, PRM collections database
2. Howard Morphy (1988) In: ‘*Australia in Oxford*’ © Pitt Rivers Museum, P74.
3. McBrearty, S and Brooks, ‘*A (2000) Journal of Human Evolution*’ 39, pp453-463.
4. Wally Caruana (2012) ‘*Aboriginal Art*’. Thames and Hudson, 3rd edition.
5. empoweredcommunities.au.org
6. maningrida.com

Gillian Morriss-Kay, Chair of the Friends

# Ainu of Japan

In February 1910, the Japanese Commission issued passports to ten Ainu people, including one who was not yet two years old. This was to enable representatives of this minority Japanese cultural group to come to London to be part of an “Ainu village” at the Japan-British exhibition in Shepherd’s Bush, London. The aim of the exhibition was to strengthen the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and to enhance Japan’s credentials as a modern empire. The Ainu representatives were not named – their role was to be on view to bring the Ainu village to life. As the exhibition approached its end, the displayed objects were sold. On 26th October 1910, Henry Balfour bought 50 Ainu objects for the Pitt Rivers Museum, where they are still on view today, without any explanation of their cultural origins.

In its review of the exhibition, the Illustrated London News wrote: “The Hairy Ainus are a remnant of the original and conquered inhabitants of Japan and are now almost extinct.” In fact, the Ainu were not dying out, but in 1910 they were not legally recognised. It was not until April 2019 that they were formally accepted as a distinct Japanese people, and on July 12th, 2020 a National Ainu Museum was opened on the banks of Lake Poroto, Shiraoi, in southern Hokkaido. With the aim of bringing to the PRM’s Ainu objects the respect and recognition they deserve, I visited Hokkaido after attending the 2019 International Council of Museums (ICOM) conference in Kyoto, with the financial support of the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Art Fund. In the remote northern town of Abashiri I visited the Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples, and was given a tour by two curators. I spent hours in the museum’s

stores viewing their Ainu materials, and learnt from Kimio Miyatake the names of the ten individuals who took part in the London exhibition.

Knowing these names gave my visit to Hokkaido new meaning. I had previously visited the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum and the Urespa Ainu Crafts Workshop in Biratori, the southern Hokkaido town of origin of the ten Ainu exhibition visitors. I discovered that even their names were linked to place: seven of them, not necessarily related, had the surname ‘Kaizawa’, which means ‘shell river’. The Japanese district officers who registered the Ainu took words from the local environment to name them: Nibutani sits along the Saru river, known for its abundance of mussel shells. This discovery instantly brought the 50 Balfour objects to life for me, connecting them to named individuals and to a place: they were no longer simply articles of an oppressive colonial mind-set, but also of hope. ‘Ainu’ means ‘human’; they are a distinct people with no writing until recently, so their cultural inheritance is transmitted orally through their own language, songs, dances and musical instruments. Their attachment to, and respect for, nature is deeply spiritual.

The future of the 50 PRM Ainu objects is linked to today’s Nibutani artists, whose work speaks to the complex history of the Ainu and their contemporary resurgence. I hope that through co-curation and the commissioning of new works we are able to give those objects the stories they deserve, and to remember those ten individuals.

**Marenka Thompson-Odlum**, *Research Associate*



Group portrait of four seated Ainu men, four women and two children, pictured at the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910, identified by Kimio Miyatake as (R to L): Kaizawa Shiraheno, Kaizawa Kanakatoku, Monbetsu Shinotsutekan, Kaizawa Kenji, Monbetsu Nukatsutoke, Kaizawa Anretoku, Kaizawa Ratarashino, Kaizawa Sue, Kaizawa Zensuke and Kaizawa Chukicki.



# Chinese Child's Tiger Hat

For years I have been intrigued by the tiger as a motif. Throughout the world, including countries where it has never lived, it is revered for its powers of protection, its ferocity, and its strength. Everyone is fascinated by the tiger – as illustrated in the West by Rousseau's *'Tiger in a Tropical Storm'*, Blake's *"Tyger tyger burning bright"*, Judith Kerr's *"The Tiger Who Came to Tea"*, Esso's slogan *"Put a tiger in your tank"*, and in the East by the tiger rugs of Tibet,

It was traditional for a baby boy's maternal grandmother, and perhaps other relatives and friends, to give him an embroidered hat when he was a month old. It would be worn until the age of five on special occasions such as birthdays and the Lunar New Year. In the days before an understanding of modern medicine, when infant mortality rates were high, it was believed that the tiger would frighten away any demon-spirits that might cause harm to the defenceless child.



Chinese child's tiger hat, probably early 20th century, known as a 'wind hat' as the side and back flaps keep out the wind. The back flap is decorated with a butterfly for happiness and the government jianding export approval seal is hanging down on the right.

Tipu's mechanical tiger, Hokusai's *'Tiger in a Snow Storm'*, and that cure-all Tiger Balm. Most of my Asian textiles were given to the Pitt Rivers Museum some time ago, but I kept a few favourites. One such piece is a Chinese child's tiger hat, probably early 20th century, bought in the mid-1980s from what was known as 'The Old Theatre Shop' in Beijing. It is made of wonderfully bright orange silk fabric with the bold black stripes embroidered in chain stitch. On the forehead is the Chinese character 'wang' 王, meaning 'king'.

This style of headgear is known as a 'wind hat' as the side and back flaps keep out the wind. The back flap is decorated with a butterfly for happiness. Some appliqué parts appear to have been glued on. The whole hat is lined in dark blue silk. I love its upright ears and tail, its bulging eyes with 'hoods' drawn with couched thread, its white teeth, minimal whiskers, and neat little feet. The essence of tiger!



Chinese child's tiger hat detail. On the forehead is the Chinese character wang 王, meaning 'king'. The 'hoods' of the eyes are drawn with couched thread.

A government 'jianding' (export approval) seal is attached. I had been hoping that the writing on its reverse might have given useful information about the hat's provenance, but it merely translates as 'child's embroidered hat'. Web searches for similar hats indicate that it is probably from Shanxi Province. In PRM's collection there are three tiger hats: two collected by me - not on display, 2003.69.76 and 2003.69.77, and one with tiger-like ears on display in the Body Arts section: 1989.16.7 <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/collections-online>.

Other hand-crafted tiger items such as children's shoes were also common. I have several little stuffed tiger toys purchased from folk craft shops in Hong Kong in the 1980s, and also a pair of slightly kitsch modern tiger mittens.

In addition to the loss of habitat, sadly the power of the tiger is one reason for its decline in numbers as the body parts are used in folk medicine.

**Felicity Wood, Friend**



This article is an edited version of one that first appeared in *Asian Textiles* Number 76 (Summer 2020), the journal of the Oxford Asian Textile Group. I am grateful to the editor, Gavin Strachan, for permission.



Left to right Tiger toy 8 cm long, tiger toy 9.5 cm long, and tiger mitten 18 cm long bought in the 1980s from Hong Kong folk craft shops.

# INFORMATION SHEET

The Friends' Magazine is published three times a year

## INFORMATION

### Friends

[prm.ox.ac.uk/friends](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/friends)

**General Information:** Gillian Morriss-Kay  
gillian.morriss-kay@balliol.ox.ac.uk

**Programme:** Juliet Eccles  
julieteccles@virginmedia.com

**Membership:** 01367 242433  
rhking17@gmail.com

**Annual Subscription:** £30 (Joint: £40);  
Family (two adults and all their children  
under 18 living at the same address): £40;  
Over 65: £20 (Joint: £30); Student: £15 (18-25,  
in full time education).

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First subscription paid after 1 January valid  
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### Museum

**Pitt Rivers Museum, South Parks Road,  
Oxford OX1 3PP  
01865 270927**

[www.prm.ox.ac.uk](http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk)

Email: [ea@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ea@prm.ox.ac.uk)

Open: Tuesday-Sunday 10.00-16.30

Monday 12.00-16.30

Admission FREE.

**Highlight tours**

**Wednesdays 14.30 and 15.15**

Volunteer-led introduction to the Museum.

Approximately 20 minutes.

No booking required.

**After Hours**

Occasional themed evening events.

**All museum events:** see [www.prm.web.ox.ac.uk/events](http://www.prm.web.ox.ac.uk/events)

### Magazine

**Editor:** Dawn Osborne  
dawnosborne@btopenworld.com

**Design:** Juliet Eccles

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Unit 10, Oxonian Park,  
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[www.oxuniprint.co.uk](http://www.oxuniprint.co.uk)

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those of the Museum. All contributors to the  
Magazine are Friends unless otherwise stated.  
For further information see:

[www.prm.web.ox.ac.uk/events](http://www.prm.web.ox.ac.uk/events)

## MUSEUM DIARY DATES

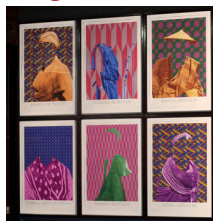
**The PRM is currently closed to the public. We invite you to enjoy the museum and collections online with a virtual tour by going to <https://tinyurl.com/prm-tour>. The museum intends to open mid September. To ensure safety of visitors and staff entry will be ticketed and a reduced capacity to meet the 2 metre rule. 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.**

## 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.



Work by Matt Smith  
Photo: © PRM

**Archive Case**

**Memoirs in my suitcase:**

Display relating to the  
lives and experience  
of Turkish migrant  
workers in Western  
Europe in the 1960s  
and 1970s.

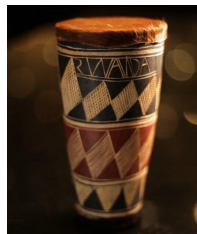


Memoirs in my suitcase  
Photo: © PRM

**Case Installations**

**Traces of the Past**

Reflections on the  
1994 Genocide  
against the Tutsi in  
Rwanda. Rwandan  
community  
members tell their  
stories of survival &  
meaning-making,  
lending objects that embody precious  
memories.



Drum (Ingoma)  
Photo: © PRM

## FRIENDS' DIARY DATES

Unfortunately all FPRM events are now  
cancelled for the foreseeable future.  
This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic  
and the risks entailed.

Future talks will be held on Zoom.  
Information to access these talks to  
follow via chimpmail. An easy way to  
watch and enjoy the speakers lined up  
from the comfort of your home.

**Talk: The world  
in a box:**

**Cabinets of  
Curiosity**

**Wednesday 21**

**October, 18.30**

**Nandini Das**

Professor of Modern

English Literature & Culture. Exeter College,  
University of Oxford, will talk on how  
Britain first learnt to collect.



Cabinet of Curiosity  
Photo: © Reuters

**Talk: The Coconut:  
How the shy fruit  
shaped our world.**

**Wednesday 18**

**November, 18.30**

**Robin Lawrence** is an

Oxford based writer

and photographer of 35 years and will talk  
about his book and the social history of the  
coconut during the past 500 years.



Photo: © Reuters

**Talk: Labelling  
Matters Project**

**Wednesday**

**18.30 (Date to be  
announced)**

**Marenka Thompson-**

**Odlum, Research**

Assistant will talk about

the historical and

present use of language

throughout the Pitt

Rivers Museum.



Labels at PRM  
Photo: © PRM

For further information contact:  
[julieteccles@virginmedia.com](mailto:julieteccles@virginmedia.com).