

UNDERSTANDING OUR PASTS,  
IMAGINING OUR FUTURES









# OUR VISION

To inspire and share knowledge and understanding with global audiences about humanity's many ways of knowing, being, creating and coping in our interconnected worlds by providing a world-leading museum for the cross-disciplinary study of humanity through material culture.



## Strategic Priorities

Reach, engage and inspire audiences with the Museum's unique collections through innovative and imaginative programming

Activate the collections through cutting-edge research and teaching, ensuring evidence informs stewardship, collections care, documentation and interpretation

Bring research to life

Maintain and develop world-class standards of stewardship, collections care and access

Extend our reach through strategic and innovative partnerships



## Guiding Principles

Being an inclusive, thought-provoking, reflexive museum built upon open, engaged relationships with diverse audiences and communities

Building sustained relationships between people, objects, pasts, presents and futures

Respecting cultural diversity and enabling audiences to perceive the displays, collections and their histories from different points of view, both philosophically, physically and virtually

Being part of a process of redress, social healing and the mending of historically difficult relationships through collaboration with stakeholders near and far, including reconnecting objects with originating communities

Respecting the sensitive nature of the objects we keep and treating them with the greatest of care

Listening and learning from our stakeholders and audiences

Inspiring creativity in all its many forms

## Values

### **Connecting**

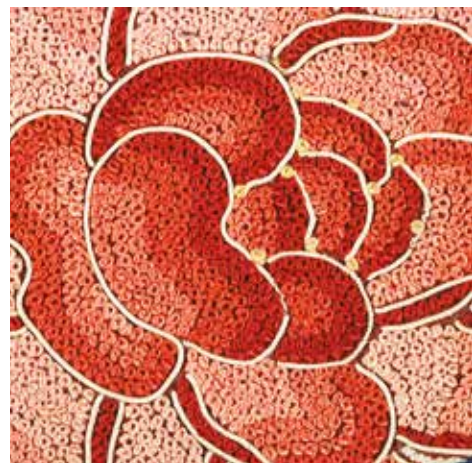
We are collaborative, inclusive and welcoming

### **Engaged**

We are receptive, enabling and sensitive

### **Enquiring**

We are open, knowledgeable and challenging



# The Pitt Rivers Museum Today

## A Democracy of Things

The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) is widely acclaimed to be one of the finest of its kind. PRM collections of anthropology and world archaeology are the most important in the UK outside the British Museum and the Museum is globally renowned as one of the greatest research and learning resources. Housing over 600,000 objects, photographs and manuscripts from almost every country in the world and from all periods of human existence, the displays – showing over 55,000 artefacts – are organised by type, rather than by geographical region or time period. This typological arrangement functions as a ‘democracy of things’ and encourages global cross-cultural reflection and the celebration of human creativity and cultural diversity.

## Our Audiences and Reach

*The Times* newspaper ranks the PRM among the world’s best museums; *The Guardian* awarded PRM the prize for the most ‘family friendly’ museum in the UK, and the Museum was awarded the Michael M. Ames Prize for Innovative Museum Anthropology (awarded by the American Anthropological Association). We have an award-winning public programme, and collaborate with teachers, museum professionals and artists. We receive consistently positive feedback from visitors, and national benchmarking surveys award the PRM the highest scores among all participating organisations in terms of Value for Money and Net Promoter Score.<sup>1</sup>

Annually, more than 430,000 people visit the Museum, including over 30,000 school children. We receive over 1.2 million unique website visits from 99% of the world’s countries and regions. We have a strong track record of working with communities and groups for whom physical, cultural and/or philosophical access to the collections may be difficult: originating and diaspora communities, and socio-economically deprived audiences.

Museum staff are involved in teaching over 2,500 students from over 75 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) annually across a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The Museum hosts MSc and MPhil degree courses in Visual, Material and Museum Anthropology that draw a global cohort of students. We are the only museum of anthropology and archaeology in the country to have such degree courses embedded within the operations of the Museum and to have academic curators jointly appointed with departments. The Balfour Library is our specialist library that supports teaching and research on and with the collections. We regularly loan artefacts to prominent exhibitions across the world and collaborate with academics from HEIs in the UK and abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> 2015–2016 Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) visitor experience benchmarking survey.











## Pitt Rivers Museum Staff

We are proud of the high level of integration between research, teaching, collaborative interpretation of the collection, education and public programming. The Museum's staff undertake leadership roles in ethnographic museum practice, nationally and internationally, through active involvement in research projects, publications, conferences, exhibition curation, professional organisations and advising other museums. These activities are all backed up by second-to-none technical, operational and Visitor Services staff.

Academic research and teaching staff have international reputations in the fields of anthropology and archaeology, and teach on several undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Oxford and elsewhere. They are known in particular for a wide range of projects that reconnect the historic museum collections with places, and local and descendant communities with which they are associated.<sup>2</sup> Museum research staff undertake fieldwork and collaborative projects in all continents of the world.<sup>3</sup> This academic work is recognised in a wide array of higher education Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact and research environment statements and units, including: Anthropology, Archaeology, History of Art, Music, Art and Design, Area Studies, Communication, Cultural and Media Studies and Drama, Dance and Performing Arts.



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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Museum's collaborative work with Haida and Blackfoot communities.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically in Canada, the United States, India, Australia, New Zealand, South Sudan, Siberia, Kenya, with the Tibetan diaspora, and in the United Kingdom.



## The Environment

The Museum is proud to meet the international standard for environmental management systems, demonstrating best practice in curbing our environmental impact.<sup>4</sup>

## Governance and Funding

The Museum's statutory purpose, vision and governance underlie its distinctive nature as a university museum. We are an accredited museum with a collection designated in its entirety. The collections are housed within a purpose-designed original building and off-site stores that are both owned by the University of Oxford. The PRM forms part of the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries & Museums division (GLAM). The Museum's Director reports to the Pro-Vice Chancellor for GLAM and the Museum's Board of Visitors who report to University Council through the Oxford University Museum Board.

The Museum's operational costs (2015/16) are covered by funds from a range of sources: University of Oxford, 34%; external competitive government and philanthropic sources, 57% (Higher Education Funding Council England, 26%; Arts Council England, 14%; grants and philanthropy, 17%); commercial activity and other income, 9%.

To enable the Museum to deliver its ambitious but achievable goals we will put in place the following enabling strategies.



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<sup>4</sup> The Museum has recently been certified to ISO14001.









Religious Figures - Asia

# REACH, ENGAGE AND INSPIRE AUDIENCES WITH THE MUSEUM'S UNIQUE COLLECTIONS THROUGH INNOVATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE PROGRAMMING

We are privileged to be a much-visited and much-loved museum. We will develop and expand our award-winning public programmes to existing, new and diverse audiences, inspiring them to connect with our collections in innovative ways.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** We will commission audience research to understand our current audiences better, enabling us to reach out to new and more diverse audiences and to inform and develop programming.

- We will audit our existing audience data and processes to assess how well they are telling us what we need to know, and we will change and/or commission additional audience research to tell us what we do not know.
- Using the results, we will increase access for disadvantaged groups and improve provision to suit different learning styles, including the use of sound, touch, demonstration, dialogue, images, texts, film, social interaction and opportunities to participate, both on- and off-site.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** We will undertake a comprehensive review of our displays and programming from an ethical perspective, considering how they acknowledge their sometimes-difficult, entangled histories, and we will present multi-vocal and critical narratives about these histories.

- We will review PRM displays to assess interpretation, conservation and stability of objects, and security of the cases.
- We will create vibrant and inspiring permanent and temporary displays that communicate themes via a range of formats to meet contemporary expectations.
- We will invite and enable students, researchers and community members to self-curate alternative interpretations of objects and places, exploring new ways of experiencing material culture.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** While respecting the special atmosphere of the Museum, we will enhance visitors' experiences of the Museum to develop understanding of the collections both physically and digitally.

- We will improve our multi-language provision to offer a more inclusive experience for visitors.
- We will develop a new introductory installation that reflects our vision and responds to audience needs.
- We will introduce sound and moving image into the Museum's historic galleries and temporary display areas to create an immersive multi-sensory experience.
- We will examine the Museum's photographic and film archives in collaboration with contemporary diaspora and global artists, and invite artists to use the space for theatre, dance, poetry and musical performance.



## **ACTIVATE THE COLLECTIONS THROUGH CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH AND TEACHING, ENSURING EVIDENCE INFORMS COLLECTIONS CARE, CURATION, DOCUMENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

We will maintain and grow our reputation as a centre for excellence in collections' research, generating new knowledge and perspectives about the Museum and its collections. Collaboration and inclusiveness stand at the centre of our work, and we will continue to ensure research is created and communicated through many perspectives.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** To maintain and expand our exceptional collections research programme, generating new knowledge and perspectives about the Museum and its collections.

- We will set up and support ambitious programmes for research, both in-house and in collaboration, as well as continue to generate and facilitate object-based teaching and research in our purpose-built facility.
- We will maintain our strength in working with other UK HEIs, whilst diversifying the range of partners and disciplines with whom we work to develop research impact and case studies supporting the next Research Excellence Framework.
- We will increase research funding, aiming to secure at least one major UK/European/international research council grant every three years.

**OBJECTIVE 5:** To lead and support international dialogues and debates on the role of museums.

- We will play an active role in international dialogues and policy discussions on the role of museums, material culture and the entangled histories that often underpin it, through our research, our programming and how we manage ourselves as an organisation.
- We will set up programmes and conversations to inspire and question current debates around identity, ownership, authority, access, art practice and creativity, archival and heritage practices, mobility, rights, cultural appropriation and redress.







## BRING RESEARCH TO LIFE

In line with the GLAM Strategic Plan and building on our current programmes we will develop and expand our Public Engagement with Research (PER), bringing research to life for new and diverse audiences.

### **OBJECTIVE 6:** To continue to promote the Museum as both a learning space and an inclusive space.

- We will continue to offer workshops, events and activities to our core public audiences as well as develop new strands of programming.
- We will work with community groups for whom the Museum provides an inclusive space (with emphasis on the health and well-being agenda; part of this will be to develop our work with refugees, and originating and diaspora communities, both local and international).
- We will work with formal learners in statutory education (early years to age 18), including schools with pupils from socio-economically deprived backgrounds who may not otherwise have access to cultural provision.
- We will develop more targeted programmes including for lifelong learners, 16–35-year-olds, and families.

### **OBJECTIVE 7:** To develop a specific PER strategy that will build on the work of successful past programmes, inspiring and developing new ways of engaging with research for all.

- We will develop new ways of working with researchers within and beyond the University.
- We will develop programmes with both the specialist research community as well as wider non-specialist audiences providing public talks, workshops, seminars, roundtables and performances.

### **OBJECTIVE 8:** : We will explore new digital opportunities to enable the collections to be experienced in new ways by global audiences.

- We will increase digital access to all collections online (including artefact, photograph, sound, and manuscript collections) through targeted projects.
- We will trial 3D imaging of collection highlights and experiment with bringing virtual reality and augmented reality into the galleries and digital spheres.



## **MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS OF STEWARDSHIP, COLLECTIONS CARE AND ACCESS**

Our world-renowned collections and displays lie at the heart of everything we do. The exceptionally well-documented PRM collections are a vast resource, supported by comprehensive collections databases that offer unrivalled access to the collections' data.

**OBJECTIVE 9:** To continue to develop standards and our reputation as a centre for excellence in collections' stewardship by investing in collections care and documentation to provide maximum access and learning for all audiences (face to face and digital)

- We will catalogue, photograph and create online catalogue records for 110,000 objects currently in off-site storage by 2018.
- We will catalogue, document and collaboratively research 5,500 textile and clothing items, and make them more fully accessible online by 2022.

**OBJECTIVE 10:** To increase access to and mobility of collections

- We will conduct a strategic review of all storage of PRM collections both on- and off-site to ensure optimally safe and stable (visible) storage throughout.
- We will review use of space within the Museum and physical access to the collection.
- We will move 110,000 artefacts from the existing Old Power Station Store to new off-site storage facility (refurbished Radcliffe Science Library Store).
- We will continue and increase our outward loans programme and ensure enhanced support to indigenous communities.

**OBJECTIVE 11:** To continue actively to develop the collections and displays

- We will develop and implement a new acquisitions plan and establish a Contemporary Collections Fund to support ongoing acquisitions and curation of contemporary artefacts.
- We will continue to refresh existing displays by incorporating new acquisitions and adding new interpretations.



C.37.1 Amulets and Religious  
Artifacts - West Africa



C.37.2 Amulets and Religious  
Artifacts - West Africa



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C.37.3 Amulets and Religious  
Artifacts - West Africa



C.37.4 Amulets and Religious  
Artifacts - West Africa







## **EXTEND OUR REACH THROUGH STRATEGIC AND INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

We believe partners should support each other based on a shared purpose and mutual benefit, with agreed outcomes that are real and impact that is measurable. Research partnerships and widening participation are integral to our life as a university museum.

**OBJECTIVE 12:** To multiply our reach and impact far beyond the usual arenas of anthropology and world archaeology through a set of strategic alliances with other disciplines both within the University of Oxford and beyond

- We will explore new and develop stronger partnerships with the humanities, political, life, medical and computer sciences, cultural geography, art schools, international relations, postcolonial studies and beyond.
- We will continue to invest in maintaining our existing strong partnerships with originating and diaspora communities, as well as developing new research partnerships globally and locally.
- We will establish a research fellowship programme specifically aimed at researchers from originating communities.
- We will maintain our strength in working with UK and international HEIs, other museums and collections, and other University of Oxford departments by continuing to develop collaborative research partnerships (including targeted international digital partnerships).
- We will develop further our partnerships with other museums and collections both within GLAM, and more widely nationally and internationally.



**OBJECTIVE 13:** To build on our existing partnerships with schools and teachers, further and higher education institutions, Oxford University's Widening Access team, as well as numerous local organisations, artists and creatives to develop new ways of working with the following:

- Local, national and international organisations who share our commitment to widen access to hard-to-reach audiences, or those for whom the Museum can act as a much-needed welcoming space. This includes organisations working with autism, partial-sightedness or people with dementia; socio-economically deprived, refugee groups, local immigrant communities, student- and grassroots movements;
- Local diasporic and other community groups whose cultures are reflected in the Museum's collection;
- Widening our work with makers and artists including the establishment of a residence programme.







## OUR FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

### **OBJECTIVE 14:** Build on and expand our successful project funding from grants, trusts and foundations to enable new activity and sustain innovation, exploring new and innovative ways of fund raising

- We will develop a more coordinated and strategic approach to grant planning and application.
- We will strengthen our operational coordination drawing on the wide range of expertise within GLAM and the wider University.
- We will develop an endowment programme, using the University's matched-contribution scheme, for key staff posts and activities.
- We will develop a philanthropic programme to support key Museum development areas.
- We will develop a more targeted partnership programme to support new and innovative work with artists, makers, performers and designers around the world.

### **OBJECTIVE 15:** Increase and expand our commercial activity

- We will review and develop our commercial strategy to reflect the strategic direction and expectations of our visitors.
- We will pilot introducing a café and refresh our shop
- We will expand our programme of usage of the Museum, and increase our income from catering, hiring of space and events.
- We will increase our space to hold more, special, costed exhibitions

### **OBJECTIVE 16:** Develop a new membership programme for patrons, corporations and individuals

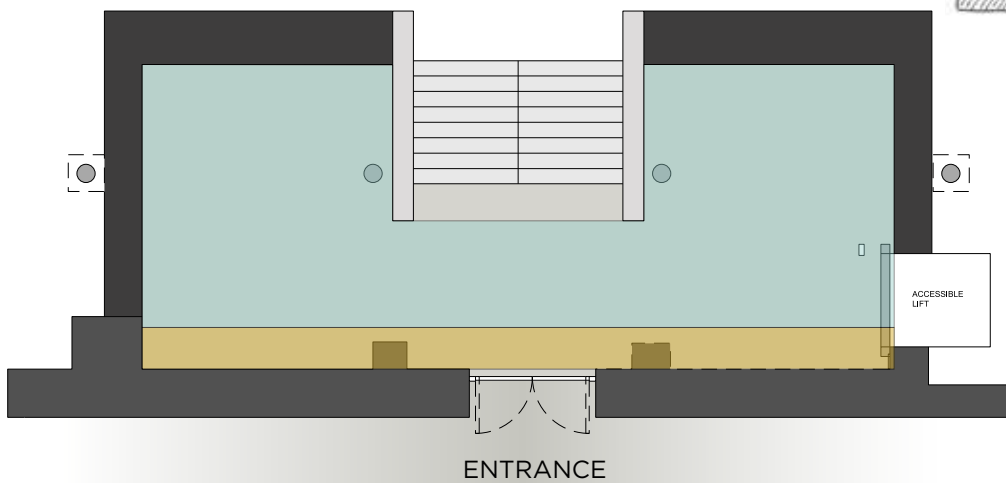
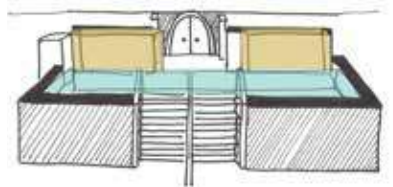
- We will review our current offering and develop a new enhanced set of membership options, including developing Patron Programmes with the Friends of the PRM and expanding our offering for current and new commercial partners.

### **OBJECTIVE 17:** Deliver a refreshed marketing and communications strategy that reflects our uniqueness and ambitions.

- We will review current communication and marketing strategies, and align with strategic direction and programming lines.



VOLUME STUDY VISUAL CONNECTION TO MUSEUM





## OUR PEOPLE STRATEGY

**OBJECTIVE 18:** Invest in recruiting, retaining and promoting the very best staff, supporting the development of skills, knowledge and competencies, and ensuring equality of opportunity and high standards of health, safety and welfare.

- We will continue to look for efficiencies leveraging our existing talent pool to achieve the Strategic Priorities set out in this plan, drawing on support from the GLAM Shared Services initiative.
- We will seek to develop and expand our expertise through the recruitment of specialised curatorial posts and look for funding opportunities to increase core staffing.



## OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY

**OBJECTIVE 19:** In line with the GLAM Strategic Plan, we will continue to invest in our IT infrastructure to ensure that it is capable, expansive, scalable and robust, to maximise the capacity of the PRM to collaborate with GLAM institutions, global and local stakeholders, and the broadest possible audiences.

**OBJECTIVE 20:** In line with the GLAM Digital Strategy, we will set out a means of curating the digital presence of the Museum and connecting with our audiences and stakeholders.

The digital strategy will bring together the following core Museum activities:

- Preservation: to ensure secure and safe storage and management of digital assets.
- Discovery: to provide high-quality, user-friendly, mobile-enabled access to resources.
- Digitisation: to transform the collections' metadata into digital form (the digital framework that has been successfully set up needs consolidation and continued digitisation work to ensure any backlog is attended to).
- Research: to develop infrastructure that enables effective digital scholarship.
- Teaching: to develop services and tools to support teaching.
- Engagement: offer meaningful collections-based digital curation and interpretation (that sits alongside our physical displays and non-digital interpretation and not as a separate sphere of activity).





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Designed by Claire Venables at Giraffe Corner

Pitt Rivers Museum South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PP

prm@prm.ox.ac.uk 01865 270927 www.prm.ox.ac.uk



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**