

ASHMOLEAN
MUSEUM
OXFORD

ANNUAL REVIEW

2020/21



ASHMOLEAN.ORG



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

LORD LUPTON

Chairman
Board of Visitors



It is perhaps just as well that, in March 2020, few of us realised how prolonged and deep the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic would be on all our lives. So I want to start my foreword by offering, on behalf of the Board, my thanks for the incredible friendship and support of so many during the last gruelling 18 months. As with so many aspects of our national life in this period, the wider Ashmolean community came together like never before, ensuring that the Museum emerges from the pandemic in robust financial shape, in good spirits and with a measured, but exciting, vision for the future.

I would like to record our thanks in particular to the following:

- The University and GLAM, who have provided critical and (importantly) unwavering support to enable us to carry out our leading work in teaching and research, as well as developing our strategy to enhance engagement with the local community and wider public under our 'Ashmolean For All' purpose and allowing us to be on a strong footing upon re-opening
- Our loyal supporters, who have not missed a heartbeat in their support for us. The strong allegiance of our Patrons can be seen in our over 95 per cent retention rate despite a year of closures, contributing over £120,000 back into the

Museum. Our Annual Appeal saw over £100,000 flowing in from new Members and old to support us when we needed it most

- The UK Government Culture Recovery Fund which, in April 2021, awarded Oxford University £640,000 to help the Ashmolean Museum, History of Science Museum, Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum to recover and re-open
- Those other donors who have made critical investments in our future during such uncertain times. Our endowment, for example, continues to grow, thanks not least to the recent commitment of the Shikanai family to our Japanese collections, to celebrate alongside the *Tokyo: Art & Photography* exhibition, bringing our total endowment value to over £31m
- We are grateful too to many long-standing supporters who have not only shown us the kindness of generous support this year, but have also offered security in our programme planning for a post-pandemic world. In particular, our thanks go to The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts for its commitment to the University Engagement Programme, to Barrie and Deedee Wigmore for their incredibly generous underpinning of our future exhibition programme and to the Sarikhani family for supporting generously the re-designed (and beautiful) Sarikhani Family Ancient Middle East Gallery. It is thanks to benefactors such as these that we have the confidence to think creatively and ambitiously about the next chapter for the Museum
- Finally, a special thanks to our wonderful staff and volunteers, who have had the most challenging of years. Their spirits did not flag, they willingly adapted to doing new things in new roles and they have brought dedication and joy back to the Museum as we have re-opened.

As we emerge from the Covid chrysalis, we are right now giving a lot of positive thought to the future of the Museum, and what that might mean: how we may improve the building, how we display and interpret our objects, how we excite and entice a wider audience and how we drive the Ashmolean forward in a rapidly changing social and cultural world – for the benefit of Oxford, for the UK and indeed for the world.

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

XA STURGIS

Director,
Ashmolean Museum



It is very difficult when writing about the year just past not to resort to the clichés that have become the currency of the present moment. This has indeed been a year like no other, one in which we have all had to adapt to a new – if as yet undefined – normal. And yes, the challenge for all of us has been how to accept unprecedented levels of uncertainty and plan for a future in which so little can be relied on.

But this lack of certainty has also provided a moment for reflection: to focus on what is important; to re-examine the ways in which we used to do things and to consider whether some of the changes forced upon us through the pandemic are worth holding on to – and if so how to ensure that we do this.

For the Ashmolean, as for so many other museums and cultural organisations, the pandemic has changed our relationship with our visitors – inevitable in a year in which our doors have been closed to them for six months. It has opened up possibilities of a global virtual audience; made us question a business model (that has proved itself so vulnerable) of chasing after ever more visitors; suggested new ways of working with each other and in partnership with others. Above all, perhaps, the pandemic has made many of us even more aware not only of the value of museums and cultural engagement for our health and happiness, but also of our need to work hard to ensure that these benefits are evident to all and felt throughout society.

Thinking about how we ensure that our collections matter to as broad an audience as possible, and the ways in which historic collections connect to the present, is something that has been happening across the Museum – as I hope is clear from many of the projects, exhibitions and events highlighted throughout this *Review*. It is evident, for example, in our wonderful new Ancient Middle East Gallery, generously supported by the Sarikhani Family, with its imaginative storytelling as well as its introduction of different voices and perspectives into the gallery, creatively connecting the ancient past to the present day.

But although this has unquestionably been a period of uncertainty, of change and of taking stock, I am pleased that we have also been able to assert our continued faith in the long-term importance of the Museum and its collections through a number of important acquisitions. I am enormously grateful for the faith shown by all those who have supported us in making them. Above all, I would like to thank The Art Fund and the trusts, foundations and individuals (as well as the Government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme) that have allowed us to acquire the magnificent, Antwerp-period Van Dyck full-length portrait of a woman and one of the finest groups of early English silver that remained in private ownership from the Mountbatten collection.

While our exhibitions and other programmes have inevitably been curtailed through this strange year, this report still bears testimony to exceptional levels of activity and creativity. The year has just ended with the opening (one year behind schedule) of our major exhibition *Tokyo: Art & Photography* to critical acclaim, thanks to a long list of patient and generous lenders and supporters, including lead supporters Mr Hirokai and Ms Atsuko Shikanai. We are enormously grateful to them and all our many colleagues, partners, friends and supporters. Their patience, adaptability and generosity have allowed us deliver an ever-shifting programme across the year just past and enable us to look to the future with unexpected degrees of confidence and ambition.

ADAPTING

PLEASE WEAR A
FACE COVERING

We re-opened our big blue doors to the public on 10 August following the first national lockdown. In the following 12 months we closed and re-opened them two more times, adapting our building and operations to ensure that our Museum was as welcoming and as safe as possible for both visitors and staff. Across the year we were open for 184 days, almost exactly half of the time.



Welcoming visitors back to the Museum

During the year we welcomed 108,116 visitors to the Museum, just over 12 per cent of pre-Covid visitor numbers. Visitor surveys show that those who did come spent longer in the Museum and appreciated their visit more than ever. They were also very generous, with donations per visitor rising by 365 per cent.



Adapting ways of working

The Ashmolean, like museums and galleries across the world, has adapted its practices to allow exhibitions to continue despite the pandemic. For example, curators and conservators often now oversee the unpacking and hanging of precious works virtually.



Arthur Hughes (1832-1915), *The Knight of the Sun*, 1860-1, Watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 22.3 x 31.6 cm. Signed: A HUGHES. Presented by Mrs Reginald Cripps, 1949. WA1949.189

Sharing our Pre-Raphaelite drawings

National lockdowns and reduced capacities as a result of social distancing meant that our exhibition *Pre-Raphaelites: Drawings and Watercolours* from our own exceptional collections could run for only six short weeks, during which it was seen by 11,147 visitors. A film of the show was downloaded 9,344 times and the exhibition is now touring to two further venues (Watts Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ballarat), allowing it to be enjoyed by many more.



Keeping staff and visitors safe

We have adapted our building and ways of working to ensure the safety of visitors and staff with one-way routes, hand sanitisers and signage encouraging social distancing and mask wearing. From our re-opening in August we introduced pre-booked tickets for all visitors, a pop-up café on our forecourt and new cleaning regimes throughout the Museum.



New homes for our collections

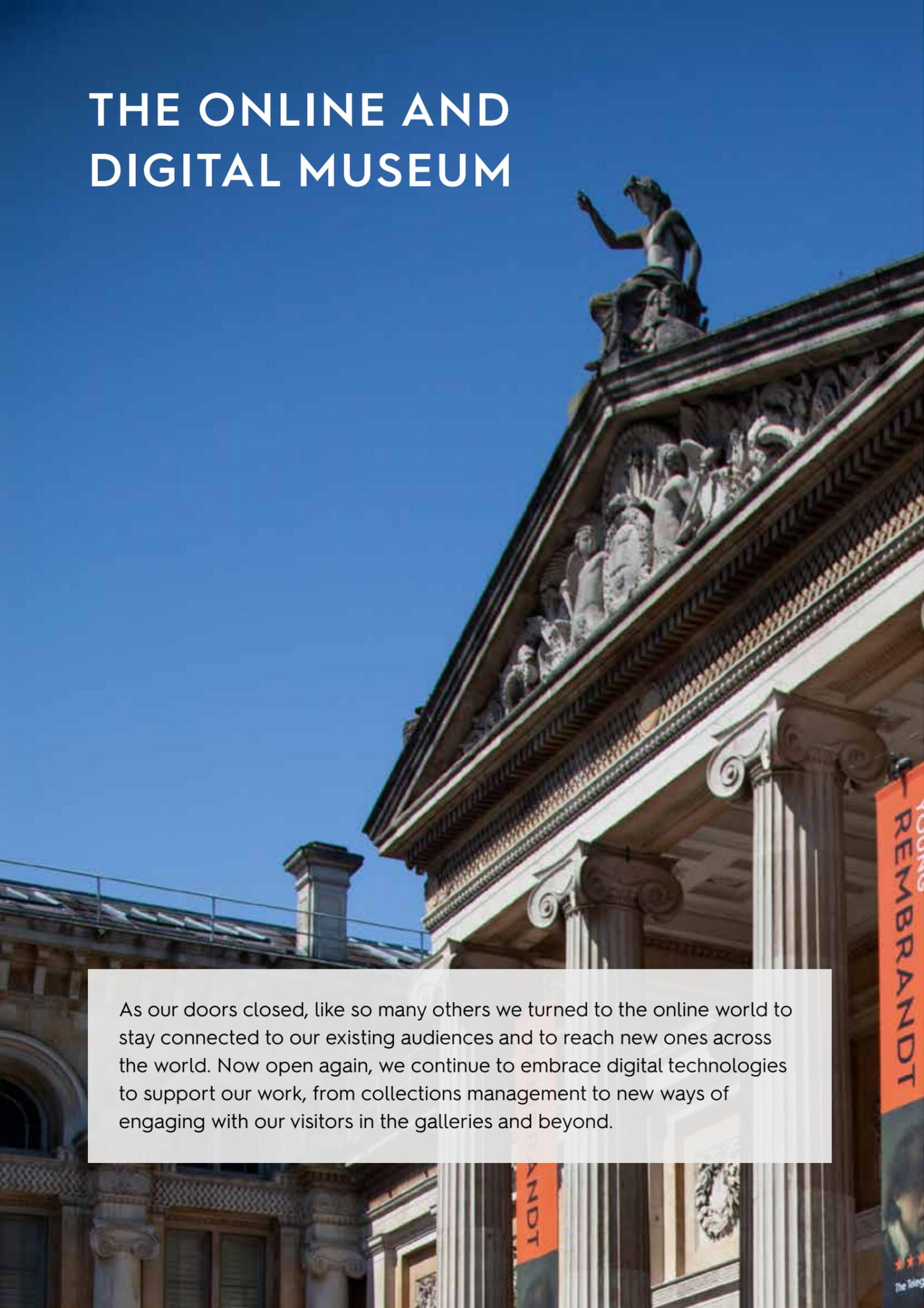
While many Museum staff moved to working from home throughout the year, work continued in our conservation studios and collection stores. From September 2020 we began a major project of decanting 65,000 objects from our temporary off-site store, ahead of their move to new collection facilities being created in Oxford and Swindon. These will house the combined collections of the four University Museums.



Young Rembrandt extended

Thanks to the generosity of our lenders, who allowed their works to stay in Oxford for longer than originally planned, we were able to extend our *Young Rembrandt* exhibition until 1 November 2020. This allowed it to be seen by 17,227 visitors.

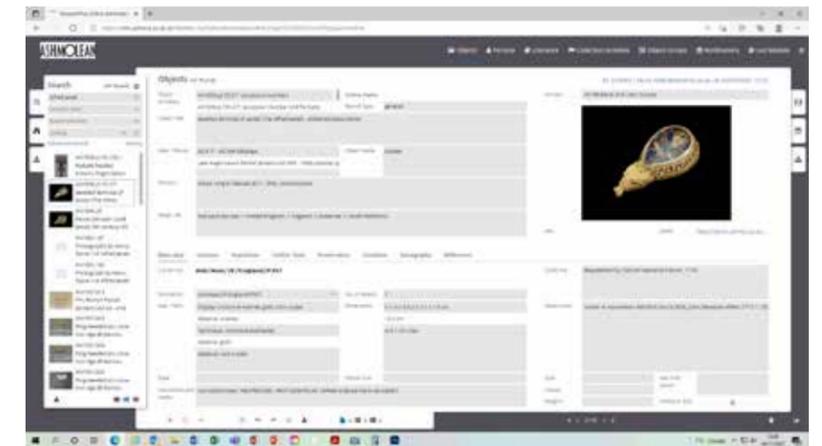
THE ONLINE AND DIGITAL MUSEUM



As our doors closed, like so many others we turned to the online world to stay connected to our existing audiences and to reach new ones across the world. Now open again, we continue to embrace digital technologies to support our work, from collections management to new ways of engaging with our visitors in the galleries and beyond.

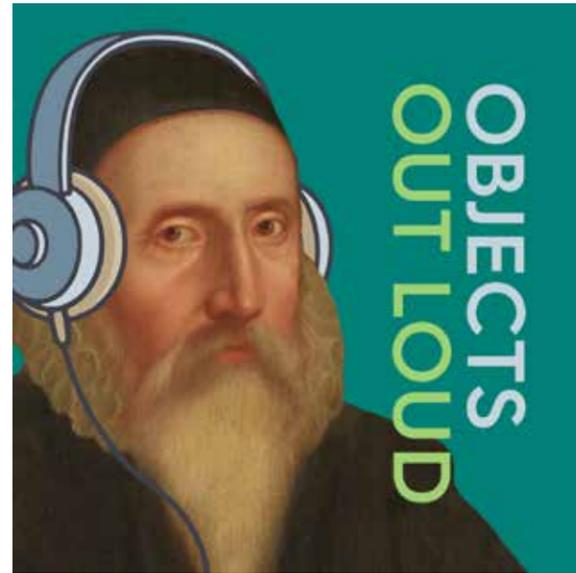
Digitising collections and collections data

Four years in the planning, we have now launched our new, web-based database MuseumPlus. Transforming cataloguing and editing processes, the system is linked to a new Digital Assets Management System which stores images, videos and other multimedia files. The database is part of a major cross-GLAM project which will see the University Museums sharing systems and eventually linking the Oxford University collections online.



Reaching schools and colleges nationwide

Adapting to new demands, we delivered 119 live online sessions for schools and colleges, reaching 3,897 students across the country. We created, piloted and launched 15 new online live learning sessions on topics ranging from Anglo Saxons to Creative Writing. We also developed four new home online learning packages for use by families and schools.



Sharing secrets across the world

Between January and May 2021 we released 25 episodes of our *Museum Secrets* Podcasts, which were enthusiastically received ('These podcasts are fabulous!'; 'An absolute joy, thank you so much for these'). The podcasts have been downloaded 49,000 times, with 55 per cent of listeners coming from outside the UK. They were followed by our *Objects Out Loud* Podcasts. These explored objects in the collections that have inspired poetry and literature, alongside readings of works based on them.

Building our online community

Our engaging and varied online content attracted 35,000 new followers on social media through the year. In December we hit 100,000 followers on Instagram. Meanwhile 12,860 adults attended or took part in our online public programmes of talks, workshops and activities.

Record-breaking online sales

As visitors moved online, so too did our shops. They achieved record-breaking online sales, particularly over Christmas when online sales increased by over 400 per cent and we sold almost five times as many Christmas cards as in 2019.

'Ashmolean from Home'

From one-minute films to online exhibitions and filmed curators' tours, from our ever-expanding online collections to home-learning resources, we have been reaching and supporting our audiences in many ways, both here in Oxford and around the world. Almost 120,000 visits were made to our online collections website in the year, an increase of more than 35 per cent, and Ashmolean videos were viewed more than 422,000 times.



A ground-breaking multimedia guide for families

'Ashmolean Adventure', a new interactive digital guide for families, was launched on 13 July. This innovative multimedia guide was developed with our partners Imagineer. It exploits the potential of digital learning while ensuring a shared and sociable experience for families as they explore Ashmolean objects and paintings through games, quizzes, sounds and stories.

'It was fantastic! Kept the children focused ... We all had a great time and learned lots of new things. Thank you.' (online survey)



ASHMOLEAN FOR ALL



We are determined to improve the way in which the Museum represents, engages with and includes all communities and individuals. We want to welcome as broad an audience as possible and aim to ensure that we support everyone in engaging with and enjoying our Museum. The pandemic has made that job even more challenging, but throughout the year we have worked hard to be an 'Ashmolean for All'.



A virtual 'One World' festival

The 'One World' celebration of Oxfordshire's many communities and faiths usually sees the Museum humming with events and activities across a two-day festival. This year the festival moved online. Here it featured a number of events, films, talks and demonstrations on the theme of light in the darkness, attracting 10,200 views across the winter months.



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Lockdown artists see work at the Ashmolean

Winners of the **ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE** competition get their pictures on the walls of prestigious museum

WINNING pictures from the Ashmolean's lockdown art competition were given an official museum's arrival. Almost 1,000 people entered the Artists in Residence contest supported by The Oxford Times, which saw participants creating artistic responses to coronavirus and its challenges. The winners and runners-up were revealed in last week's paper and prizes handed out at a socially-distanced event at the museum. The pictures are available for the public to view in the galleries of the Museum from Wednesday.

Artists in Residence winners and professional artists, of all ages, submitted paintings, drawings and photographs, collages, sculpture, video, animation and music. Strong messages emerged of the 2020, the importance of friends and family, appreciation of the natural world, and the deep impact of the Black Lives Matter movement. All subjects, which inspired our readers, were included.

Pictures were also won by Under 12s winner William Mace, 10, and runner-up 12-year-old Daisy, 12, and runner-up 13-year-old Arthur Johnson, 13, and 18-year-old winner Helen Thompson and runner-up Aislinn Kavanagh, 18.

The competition was judged by Anna Baines, cultural director, TV presenter and Creative Director at Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education, Catherine, Director of Artworks, Dr Emma Mahon, GP and American Professor of Oxford University's Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, Museum Director Dr Sarah and Tim Hughes of The Oxford Times.

The winners and quality of entries surpassed expectations, he added. "It all had the potential to be a success but we were blown away by the number of participants and the quality of the entries. It was very hard to narrow it down but these are all very worthy winners. It was a great honour for The Oxford Times to announce this unique community art project. "I would urge everyone to continue to support the Ashmolean to see these pictures in all their glory".

Dr Hughes was also impressed, saying: "The work is superb from the way and content, to the emotion and loving and all our best wishes to the proud team to which events have shifted how we see our world, ourselves and those around us. It is a privilege to see the work of the winners and to see it in a public space like the Ashmolean museum and a true honour to the Ashmolean team."

• See more entries at ashmolean.org and oxfordtimes.co.uk/news

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work at the Ashmolean

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

An art competition for all

In a competition launched in partnership with the *Oxford Times*, we challenged the public to respond artistically to lockdown and the pandemic. Over 1,200 entries in many different media ranged from the witty and optimistic to the heartfelt and moving. Selected entries were printed weekly in the paper, and the winners and runners-up in each of the three age categories were displayed at the Museum.

'Our Museum: Our Voices'

'Our Museum: Our Voices' first invited Oxford University students of diverse ethnicity, gender and sexuality, followed by Sixth Form students across Oxford, to write labels for works in the collection. All students were encouraged to draw upon their own perspective, expertise or experience. In suggesting different approaches and reactions, the resulting labels offer visitors new ways of thinking about and looking at our collections.

	
<p>Aert van der Neer, <i>Winter Landscape with Skaters on a Frozen River</i>, from Gallery 45, Dutch Art, L1074.1</p>	<p>Paulus Willemisz van Vianen, <i>Ewer WA2013.1.163</i>, from Gallery 54, Wellby Collection</p>
<p>What's the Point?</p>	<p>Confidence</p>
<p>Not everything has a practical use. A picture, for example, serves no purpose but to entertain, to tell a story, to make a statement - about society or maybe about the painter themself.</p>	<p>Opulence and myth have always gone hand in hand: gold, lapis, mer-people.</p>
<p>This painting tells a story about my home country, the Netherlands, ice skating over the frozen lakes of the Northern Provinces. It has no use, but functionality was never a necessity. Why should it be today?</p>	<p>Mermaids wait for their handsome mortal to sweep them off their tails; but this merman is not waiting, vulnerably sitting out of water unfazed as he plays by the lapis pool, his split tail lodging him on the ever edge.</p>
<p>Buster Van der Geest</p>	<p>The merman knows he's unique. His counterparts are silver; he is gold. They slip in and out of the waves, where he stands out like a ruby on the collar bone of a milkmaid.</p>
	<p>Flora</p>



Recognition for a long-term partnership

Since 2018, together with colleagues across GLAM, we have been working in a close partnership with the Iffley Academy School for children with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In July Iffley Academy became one of only six schools nationally to receive a Platinum Artsmark Award in recognition of their outstanding provision and contribution to arts. Partnership work with the Ashmolean and GLAM was highlighted as a key factor in Iffley Academy receiving the award.



Rethinking the Ancient Middle East

The new Ancient Middle East Gallery's displays, narratives, design and interactives were developed through extensive visitor research and experiment. Supported by the generosity of the Sarikhani family and informed by the principles of an 'Ashmolean for All', the gallery seeks to provide all our visitors with exciting and engaging ways to explore some of the most significant of human stories, while also being a place where the past is connected to the present.

Parents and children learning together

A total of 318 babies and adults took part in our live online Baby Ashmoles sessions. Meanwhile 'Creating Keepsakes' was a co-created display of cups crafted by parents and carers from communities in East Oxford. Inspired by an ancient Greek 'feeding cup' in our collection, this display was the result of a project delivered in partnership with Peeples - a charity that supports parents and children to learn together - and Oxfordshire Artweeks.



THE RESEARCHING AND TEACHING MUSEUM

Teaching our students

Despite the pandemic, over 2,154 Oxford University students participated in courses, lectures and tutorials delivered by Ashmolean curators both in person and online. Between them, and in addition to their many other curatorial duties, 26 Ashmolean curators delivered teaching equivalent to 7.5 full-time professors.

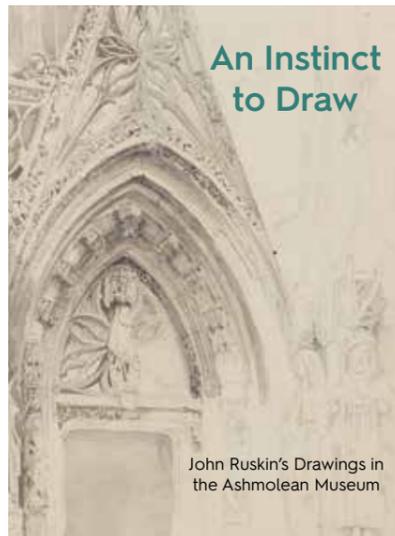
Securing research funding

As well as the 37 individual 'outputs' published by Ashmolean researchers through the year, they were also the lead or partner in 18 externally funded research projects (worth £4m) during the year. In addition, they were the lead or partner in securing seven new, externally funded research projects (valued at £11.6m across their lifetime).

As a University Museum we strive to advance knowledge and understanding through world-class research and teaching. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, meaning the closure or limited access to our study rooms, we continued to teach from our collections across the University and beyond. All our curators contributed to the Research Excellence Framework exercise and Ashmolean projects and exhibitions featured in eight Impact case studies submitted by the University.

Supporting researchers

Despite the challenges of Covid, we have continued to support researchers providing access to our collections and responding to research enquiries. Our online collections continue to grow, with 200,000 objects available online. We re-opened our Western Art Print Room and Eastern Art Study Rooms as soon as restrictions allowed and have since retrieved over 2,240 objects and works on paper for over 117 researchers and visitors.



An Instinct to Draw

John Ruskin's Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum

Publishing our collections

We continue to disseminate knowledge through our collection catalogues and books. During the year we published three works on our collections of British drawings: *An Instinct to Draw: John Ruskin's Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum* by Stephen Wildman, *The Works of Samuel Palmer* by Colin Harrison and *Pre-Raphaelites: Drawings and Watercolours* by Christiana Payne et al., the last to accompany our exhibition. In addition we partnered with Hali to publish a catalogue of our *Collection of Greek Embroideries* by Francesca Leoni.

New evidence on a forgotten 'Rembrandt'

In September 2020 we were able to present a new evidence relating to a small panel painting, once attributed to Rembrandt but subsequently downgraded as a later copy or imitation. Dendrochronology (the science of analysing historical tree rings to determine the age and origin of wood) revealed that the panel was composed of wood from the same oak tree as other paintings made by Rembrandt around 1630. It is therefore an authentic work made in Rembrandt's workshop in Leiden.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), *Head of a Bearded Man*, c.1630. Oil on oak panel, 16 x 13 cm. WA1951.8



An Italian drawings project

Thanks to a major grant from The Getty Foundation, we are carrying out new research to create an online catalogue of over 2,200 Italian drawings for a global audience. This is part of a broader initiative on curatorial training, intended to nurture the next generation of drawings specialists and widen access to graphic arts collections. Like other Ashmolean research projects, we have had to be agile in re-shaping our plans in the face of the pandemic, pausing parts of the work and moving online to host specialist workshops and bring in expert advice.

Formerly Anonymous Italian Artist, now identified as by Francesco Vanni (1563–1610), *Studies of a boy's head and hands (Studies for the Death of San Galgano)*, c. 1607–1608. Black chalk on blue paper, some brown stains throughout, 17 x 15.5 cm. Presented by Dr John Johnson, 1947. WA1947.181



The O-ACE study used its research to build an online cultural intervention using the Museum's digitised collections. It focused on stories of personal resilience such as Gwen John and Ibrahim el-Salahi.

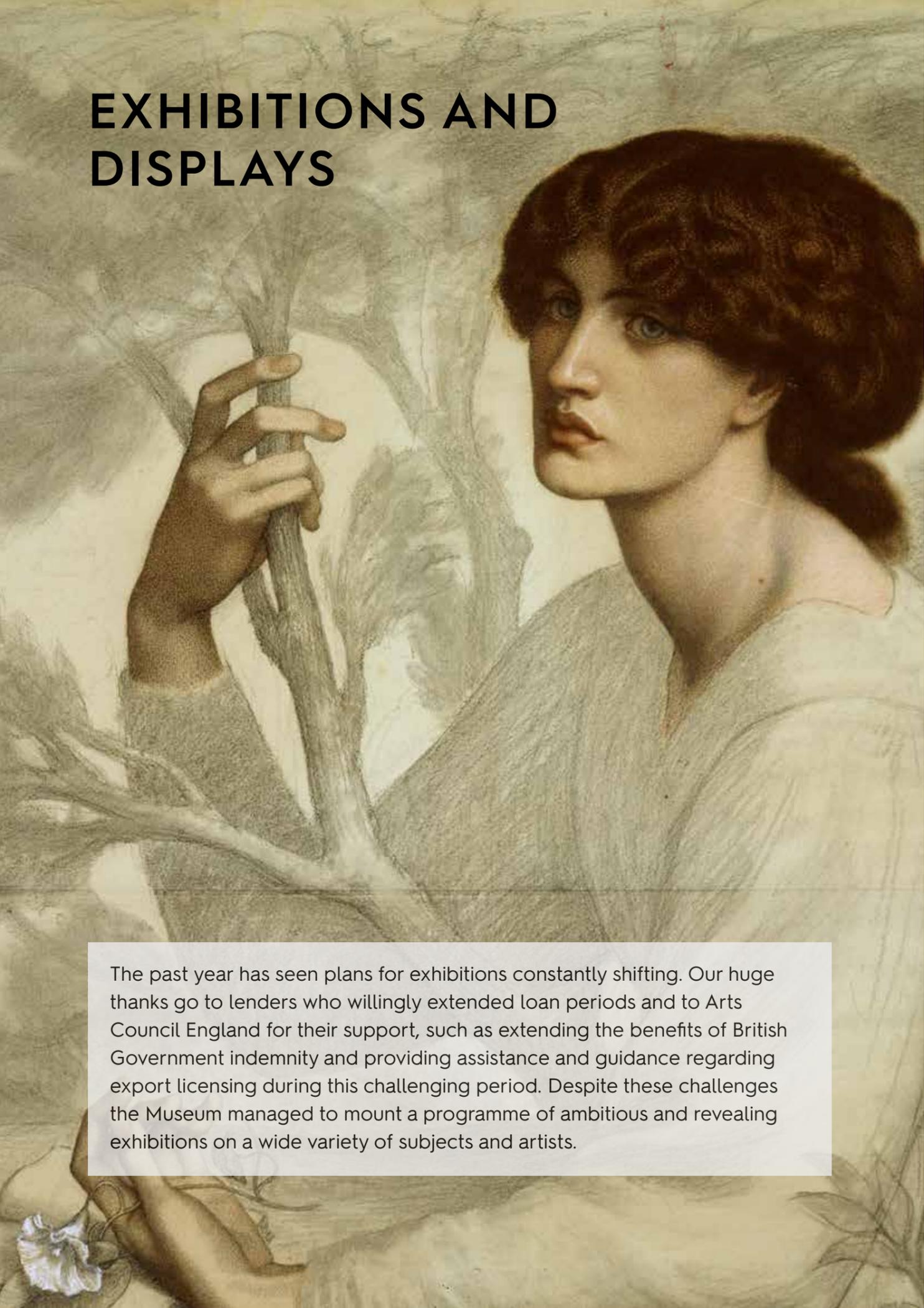
O-ACE research project

An interdisciplinary research team from the Ashmolean, the University's Department of Psychiatry and the Oxford Internet Institute explored how to optimise online cultural content for mental health and wellbeing. Young people, a group identified by the Online Active Community Engagement (O-ACE) project as being at high risk of undiagnosed anxiety and depression, worked with the team to co-produce an online intervention, drawing on the Museum's digitised collections and curatorial expertise.

More than 400 participants aged between 16 and 24 were involved with the project. It focused on stories of personal resilience: Welsh artist Gwen John, living in the shadow of her famous brother, or Ibrahim el-Salahi, founder of the 'Khartoum School' of art and a Sudanese political prisoner. For six weeks participants assessed the intervention alongside the regular Ashmolean website for effects on mood, self-esteem, empathy and concentration. Findings indicated that exposure to online culture can help to alleviate mental distress – especially among male, ethnically diverse and non-student populations – and constitutes a legitimate alternative or supplement to prescriptions and therapy. Pilot data from the O-ACE study will inform future grant applications and collaborations between the Museum and health sciences.



EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS



The past year has seen plans for exhibitions constantly shifting. Our huge thanks go to lenders who willingly extended loan periods and to Arts Council England for their support, such as extending the benefits of British Government indemnity and providing assistance and guidance regarding export licensing during this challenging period. Despite these challenges the Museum managed to mount a programme of ambitious and revealing exhibitions on a wide variety of subjects and artists.



Pre-Raphaelites: Drawings and Watercolours (17 May–20 June 2021)

This major exhibition, curtailed by the restrictions of the pandemic, featured 101 works from the Ashmolean's exceptionally rich collections of works by Pre-Raphaelite artists. Curated by Dr Christiana Payne, the exhibition was organised by theme and explored the huge variety of Pre-Raphaelite drawings in the collection, from swift informal sketches to large, highly finished works for exhibition, as well as drawings and watercolours using a wide variety of techniques and media. The exhibition also considered the Pre-Raphaelites' range of subject matter, from works of pure imagination to subjects drawn from contemporary and historical literature, and from the most meticulous studies of nature by Ruskin to the idealised 'stunners' of Rossetti.

Pre-Raphaelites: Drawings and Watercolours was accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue by Christiana Payne with essays by Fiona Mann and Robert Wilkes, as well as a film to compensate for the exhibition's short and limited run. It was supported by The Patrons of the Ashmolean Museum, The Roger and Ingrid Pilkington Charitable Trust, The Anson Charitable Trust and others who prefer to remain anonymous.

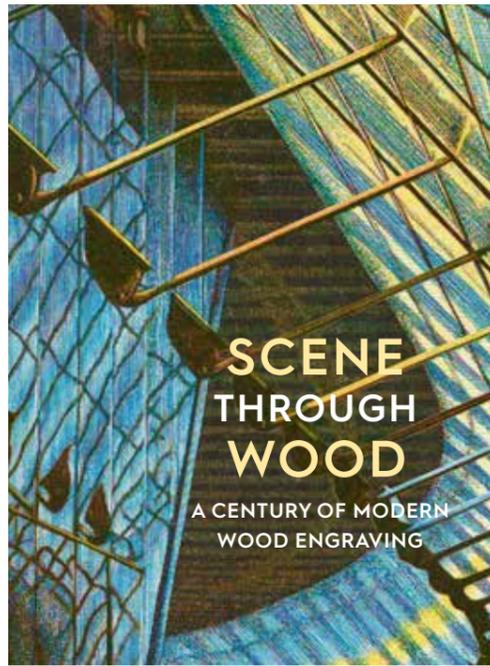
Opposite: Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *The Day Dream*, 1872–3, Pastel and black chalk on tinted paper, 104.8 x 76.8 cm. Bequeathed by May Morris, 1939, WAI939.6

Mediterranean Threads: 18th- and 19th-century Greek Embroideries (16 May–19 September 2021)

This display showed a selection of Greek embroideries in the Ashmolean's collections for the first time. *Mediterranean Threads* highlighted the inventiveness and technical dexterity of their makers – mostly women – as well as the social aspects of these textiles and the indebtedness of their decorative repertoires to both local and wider Mediterranean visual traditions.



Detail of cushion cover, Crete, 17th–18th century, linen, cotton and silk, 52 x 91 cm. EA2004.6



Scene Through Wood
(10 August–5 November 2020)

Curated by Anne Desmet, this exhibition celebrated the centenary of the founding of the Society of Wood Engravers and explored the extraordinary inventiveness and variety of works created by the most significant exponents of the medium. In her own words, Desmet's selection was driven by works that 'moved me ... that drew me in, that demanded attention and lingered long in the mind'.

Owning the Past: From Mesopotamia to Iraq

ملكية التاريخ من بلاد الرافدين الى العراق

(12 December 2020–22 August 2021)

Curated by Dr Paul Collins, this dual language exhibition (in Arabic and English) focused on the long-lasting impact of the past on the present and how an interest in Iraq's ancient past shaped the country's creation by the British in the years after the First World War. Local members of the Syrian, Iraqi and Kurdish diaspora contributed their voices and thoughts about who owns the heritage of their homelands and tell their histories. *Owning the Past* opened with an installation by the artist Piers Secunda which was made possible thanks to the generosity of Arts Council England and the *Owning the Past* Supporters Circle. The exhibition was supported by The van Houten Fund, Al Tajir Trust, and The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (Gertrude Bell Memorial).



Exhibition view ©Ian Wallman

Hans Coper 100
(17 October 2020–16 September 2021)

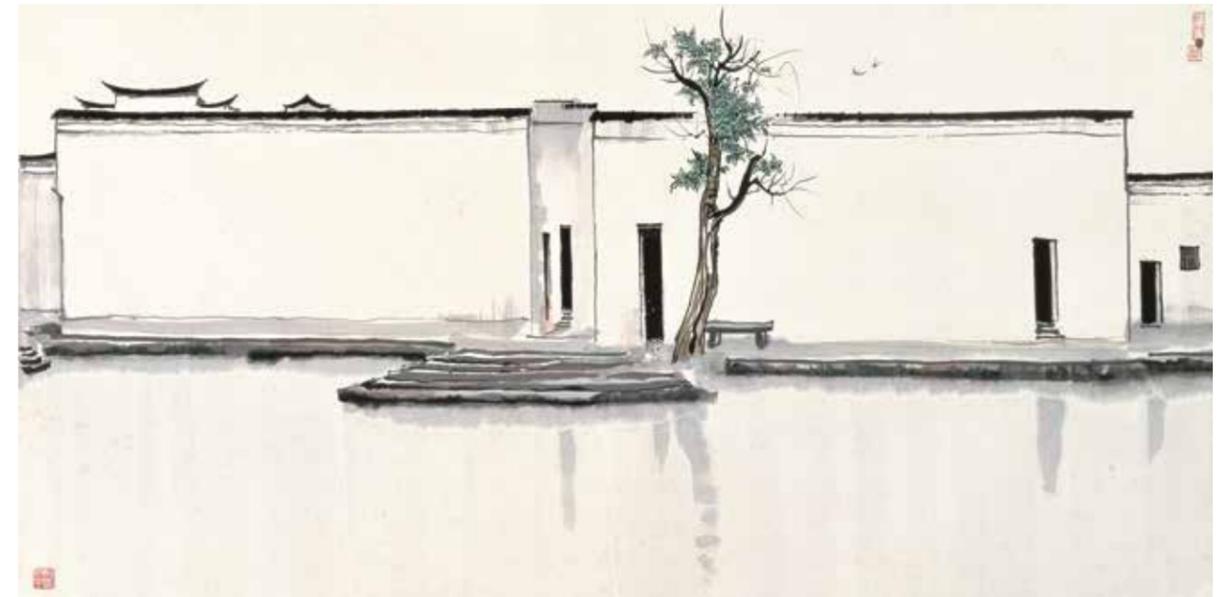
Curated by Charles Park, in collaboration with the Ashmolean curator Matthew Winterbottom and supported by Ben Williams, James Fordham and Rachel Ackland (Oxford Ceramics Gallery), this exhibition celebrated the centenary of the birth on 17 October 2020 of acclaimed ceramic artist Hans Coper (1920–1981). The intriguing display set his works into dialogue with ancient art from the Museum's collections.



Hans Coper, cup form with vertical grooves, c.1969, stoneware, 15 cm high, private collection and black bud form on squared base, c.1976, stoneware, 22 cm high, private collection

Wu Guanzhong (1919–2010)
(17 May–30 August 2021)

Curated by Shelagh Vainker and supported by the Denys Firth Family Foundation, the exhibition focused on 37 works lent by Hong Kong Museum of Art, representing the different decades of Wu Guanzhong's life from the 1950s onwards in oils, ink, pencil and other media. This was the first opportunity for the UK public to see Wu Guanzhong's works since his 1991 exhibition at the British Museum. The display was complemented by two works from the Ashmolean's collection in the Late China Gallery.



Wu Guanzhong (1919–2010), *Two Swallows*, 1981. Ink and colour on paper, 69 x 138 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Museum of Art. Donated by Mr Wu Guanzhong and his family. © Wu Guanzhong, Hong Kong Museum of Art



Cultured Canines
(on view since 17 May 2021)

The playful, classically inspired ceramics designed by Allison Ksiaskiewicz explore the stories surrounding the history of particular breeds of dog. The works are on show in the Museum's Greek Gallery.

ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS



Anthony van Dyck and early English silver

A magnificent portrait painting by Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) and one of the finest groups of early English silver that remained in private ownership have come to the Museum, through descent, from the collection of Sir Ernest Cassel (1852–1921).

The painting portrays a young woman and is a rare example of an early full-length portrait by Van Dyck, a format normally reserved for royal and aristocratic portraiture. The finest piece of silver in this group is the ‘Bacon Cup’ of 1574. This silver gilt cup and cover is one of three made for English politician Sir Nicholas Bacon (1510–79) from the Great Seal of Queen Mary I (reigned 1553–58). The acquisition has been made possible by the Acceptance in Lieu scheme, administered by Arts Council England, with additional support from Art Fund and the generosity of trusts, foundations and individual benefactors.

Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), *Portrait of a Young Woman*, possibly *Gertrudis Wiegers*, c.1619–21. Oil on canvas, 202 x 127.0 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the Ashmolean Museum, 2021. Hybrid arrangement through Sotheby’s, with a grant from Art Fund, a bequest from the late Mrs Elizabeth Burchfield (née Knight), widow of Dr Robert Burchfield, the Silver Society and other private donors, 2021. WA2021.92

A.R. Penck works

Internationally acclaimed German artist A.R. Penck (1939–2017) mainly worked in painting, drawing, prints and sculpture. Abiding interests in system theory and cybernetics, as well as prehistoric cultures and science fiction, guided his art toward an investigation of the relationships between man and society’s systems of control and power. Following his 2019 exhibition at the Ashmolean, *Die Probleme von England (Northern Darkness IV)*, 1987, was generously gifted by the Birkelsche Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur. We acquired it together with two sculptures and numerous works on paper. The large painting was created a few years after Penck had been expatriated from East Germany and had moved from West Germany to the UK and Ireland. The painting is representative of Penck’s critical art, referencing specific historical events while also addressing wider issues facing humanity today.

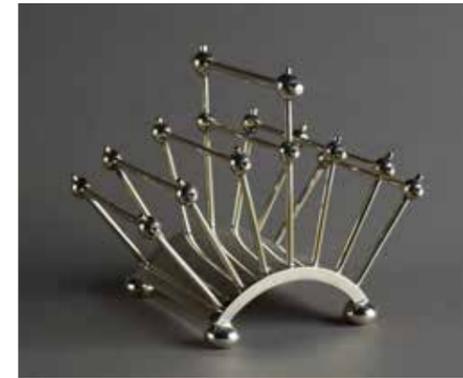


A.R. Penck (1939–2017), *Die Probleme von England (Northern Darkness IV)*, 1987. Dispersion and synthetic resin on canvas, 244 x 305 cm. Gifted by the Birkelsche Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur. WA2020.36 © DACS 2021

Frank Auerbach works

The Ashmolean was also delighted to receive an oil painting and fourteen prints by German-British painter Frank Auerbach (b. 1931). The works came from the collection of Michael and Charlotte Podro, both friends of Auerbach. *The Head of J. Y. M.*, 1972 exemplifies Auerbach's gestural brushwork and dynamic painting style. The portrait depicts Julia Yardley Mills, a professional model who sat for Auerbach every Wednesday and Sunday over a period of 30 years, until 1997.

Frank Auerbach (b. 1931), *Head of J. Y. M.*, 1972. Oil on board, 61 x 71.1 cm. Accepted by H.M. Government in lieu of inheritance tax from the estates of Michael and Charlotte Podro and allocated to the Ashmolean Museum. WA2020.111. © The Artist, courtesy Marlborough Fine Art, London



Toast rack

Regarded as one of the first industrial designers, many see Dresser's radical metalwork designs, with their total absence of ornament, as precursors to the modernism and functionalism of later decades. His work was a response to the district aesthetics of Japanese design, combined with Dresser's own progressive ideas on ergonomics and modern industrial manufacturing techniques.

Designed in 1881 by Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), manufactured by Hukin and Heath, Birmingham, toast rack. Electroplated nickel silver, 12.5 cm (h) x 14.7 cm (w) x 10.0 cm (d). Gift of Deedee Wigmore, 2020. WA2020.19

Tea bowl

This beautiful golden tea bowl by Ogawa Machiko is one of eighteen contemporary Japanese craft works acquired with funds provided by Christopher Gorman-Evans in 2020-21. The earthy cracks and deep fissures of the bowl's roughly textured exterior contrast with the matte gold smoothness of its interior, creating an intriguing tension.

Ogawa Machiko (b. 1946, Sapporo), tea bowl. Handbuilt stoneware with gold glaze, 9.5 cm (h) x 10.5 cm (d). Acquired with funds provided by Christopher Gorman-Evans. EA2020.183



Hiromitsu Takahashi (b. 1959, Kanagawa Prefecture), diptych showing Kagetori / Daidō. Kappazuri colour stencil prints, each 54 x 62 cm. Presented by Philip Harris. EA2020.215.1-2

Hiromitsu Takahashi stencil prints

This diptych is from a group of 40 kappazuri stencil prints presented by Philip Harris. Hiromitsu Takashi is one of very few Japanese artists currently creating prints using this technique, which has its roots in textile stencil dyeing. His vividly coloured works depict melodramatic scenes from the kabuki theatre, with elaborately costumed actors holding dramatic poses.

Abbas Akbari bowl

In 2020 the Ashmolean Museum was gifted a large lustre bowl by contemporary Iranian pottery artist Abbas Akbari. Made during a residency in Spain with fellow potter and lustre virtuoso Arturo Mora, this handsome vessel offers a modern twist on the centuries-old technique of lustreware, confirming its enduring charm and global appeal.

Abbas Akbari (b. 1971, Tehran), bowl. Fritware, with overglaze lustre painting. Presented by the artist. EA2020.162



Wang Tiande calligraphic landscape

Wang Tiande here uses a classical landscape composition to challenge the history and future of painting. The painted image has been overlaid with a second sheet of paper, with further images burnt using an incense stick. The stone rubbing is a reference to the practice of transmitting calligraphy down through generations.

Wang Tiande (b. 1960, Shanghai), *Landscape*, 2017. Ink and burn marks on paper, with calligraphy stone rubbing. Presented by Alice Hung. EA2020.161





Samuel Amsler print

Acquired with funds from the J. Reginald Jones bequest, this print tells a tragic story. Portraying the German artist Karl Philipp Fohr, it was engraved by fellow-artist Samuel Amsler after a drawing by Carl Barth in 1818, only a few months after their friend's tragic death in Rome; he drowned in the River Tiber aged only 23. Impressions of this portrait print were sold to raise funds for a monument in memory of Fohr.

Samuel Amsler (1791-1849), after Carl Barth (1787-1855), *Portrait of Karl Philipp Fohr (1795-1818)*, 1818, signed and dated. Engraving on chine collé, 14.8 x 11.5 cm. Purchased with the assistance of the J. Reginald Jones Bequest Fund. WA2021.8



Inkstand attributed to Peter Vischer the Younger

Peter Vischer, one of the most important but also the rarest of German Renaissance sculptors, brilliantly combined North Italian influences with those of his native Germany. This inkstand joins two others, also by Vischer, that were bequeathed to the Ashmolean by Charles Drury Edward Fortnum (1820-1899). They form a unique and a remarkable ensemble.

Peter Vischer the Younger (1487-1528), Nuremberg, c.1510-25, inkstand. Brass copper alloy, 18.1 by 16.9 cm. Presented by Danny Katz Ltd, through the Cultural Gifts Scheme, 2021. WA2021.5

Dame Elisabeth Frink sculpture

This small yet dynamic sculpture *Homme Libellule I*, by British artist Dame Elisabeth Frink (1933-1993), represents the artist's fascination with the theme of flight. At this time Frink was holidaying in an area of France at the foot of the Cévennes mountains and often swam in the nearby river. There she saw dragonflies and imagined how humans might metamorphose into one of these insects. Frink went on to create four small sculptures in the *Homme Libellule* series, all with shortened wings as if flightless. We acquired this sculpture during lockdown in early 2021, with funds provided by the Margaret Soutter Bequest Fund.

Dame Elisabeth Frink (1933-1993), *Homme Libellule I (Dragonfly Man)*, 1965. Bronze, edition 5 of 6. Purchased with funds provided by the Margaret Soutter Bequest Fund, 2021. WA2021.6



Lorenzo Fasolo, *Madonna and Child with Angels*

Music-making angels celebrate the Madonna and Child who appear to us in a splendid interior space with ornate classical architecture. The visual appeal of this devotional image, once part of an altarpiece, is enriched by the use of sparkling gold and gems (amethyst and quartz), enhancing its prestige and splendour. Painted by Lorenzo Fasolo, probably in Pavia, this brings a new artist to the Ashmolean's collections.

Lorenzo Fasolo (1462 or 1463-1516), *Madonna and Child with Angels* (the central panel from an unknown altarpiece), c.1485-95. Tempera and gilding on panel, with inset gems in the necklaces, 129.5 x 64.2 cm. Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by H.M. Government and allocated to the Ashmolean Museum, 2021. WA2021.14



Gift of 50 American works by Theodore C. and Elisabeth B. Rogers

Following their generous loans to the Ashmolean's *America's Cool Modernism* exhibition in 2018, Theodore C. and Elisabeth B. Rogers have made an extraordinary gift to the Museum through Americans for Oxford Inc. It consists of 50 American works on paper, ranging in date from two prints by Joseph Pennell of 1908 to a single work made in the Second World War by Herman Volz. Together the works constitute a representative collection of the imagery of this most distinctive period in American art. The bridges, skyscrapers and factories of the new industrial landscape are conveyed in new and daring compositions and techniques.

Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), *The Cross of Gold, Cedar Street Building*, 1908. Sandpaper ground and aquatint on off-white laid paper, 33.2 x 25.5 cm. Presented by Theodore and Elisabeth Rogers, 2021. WA2021.67

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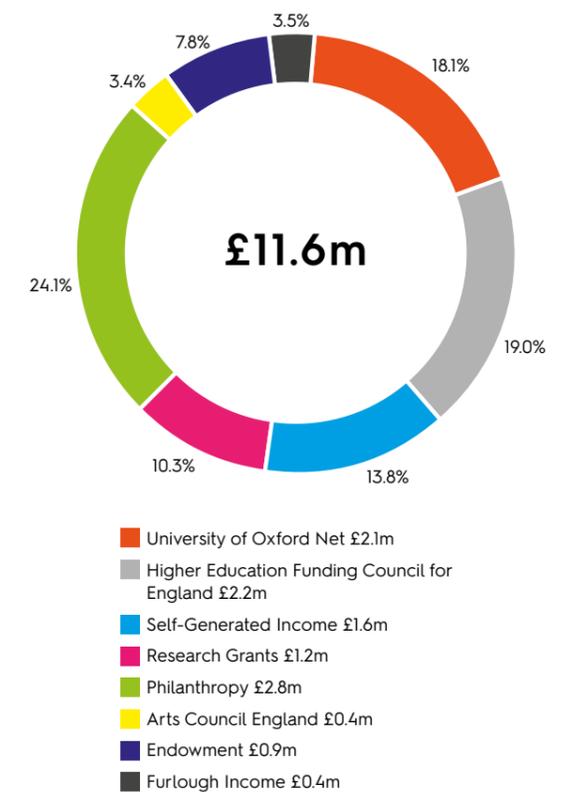
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FINANCIAL NARRATIVE

Total income

Total income received in the year was £11.6m, up £0.5m on the previous year. This was mostly as a result of a successful research grant secured to purchase specialist conservation equipment, £0.9m, and other new research grants coming on line £0.1m, coupled with increased philanthropy to support acquisition and project expenditure of £0.8m. These increases are partly offset by the reduction in self-generated income of (£1.2m) caused by the reduction in visitor footfall following the Covid-19 related closures of the museum in November 2020 and January through to May 2021, and restricted capacities in place even when open. Finally furlough income was also adverse to the previous year by (£0.1m) as the majority of non-front of house staff were not furloughed during the financial year.

As the impacts of Covid-19 work through the economy, especially the public purse and visitor economy, all sources of museum funding continue to be under great pressure. Thus building our endowment, fundraising and public donations continue to be vital for the Ashmolean's financial resilience. We are very grateful to all donors and supporters who continue to support our cause.



Total expenditure

Total expenditure in the year was £12.8m, an increase of £1.3m over the previous year. This was mostly due to the funded expenditure in relation to the newly secured research grants and project and acquisitions spend, highlighted above, less savings of £0.6m in public programming costs impacted by the closures and £0.2m in cost of goods sold due to lower sales.

Total surplus/(deficit)

The museum reported a deficit of £1.2m, which was accepted as an exceptional call on support by the University as a consequence of Covid-19.

