

ASHMOLEAN
MUSEUM
OXFORD

ANNUAL REVIEW

2024/25



ASHMOLEAN.ORG



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FOREWORD



Lord Lupton
Chairman,
Board of Visitors

Xa Sturgis
Director,
Ashmolean Museum

The past year saw two striking achievements that deserve to be celebrated. For the first time since the Museum's re-development in 2009, we welcomed over one million visitors to the Museum (1,062,924 to be precise) making us the country's most visited Museum outside London and the most popular visitor attraction in Oxfordshire. This is a considerable achievement given the very mixed fortunes of museums across the country since the pandemic. Visitors have come in unprecedented numbers drawn not only by our collections and exhibitions but also by an increasingly varied public programmes including events such as the One World Festival – engaging with communities across Oxford and Oxfordshire and exemplifying our ambition to be a museum that welcomes the widest possible public.

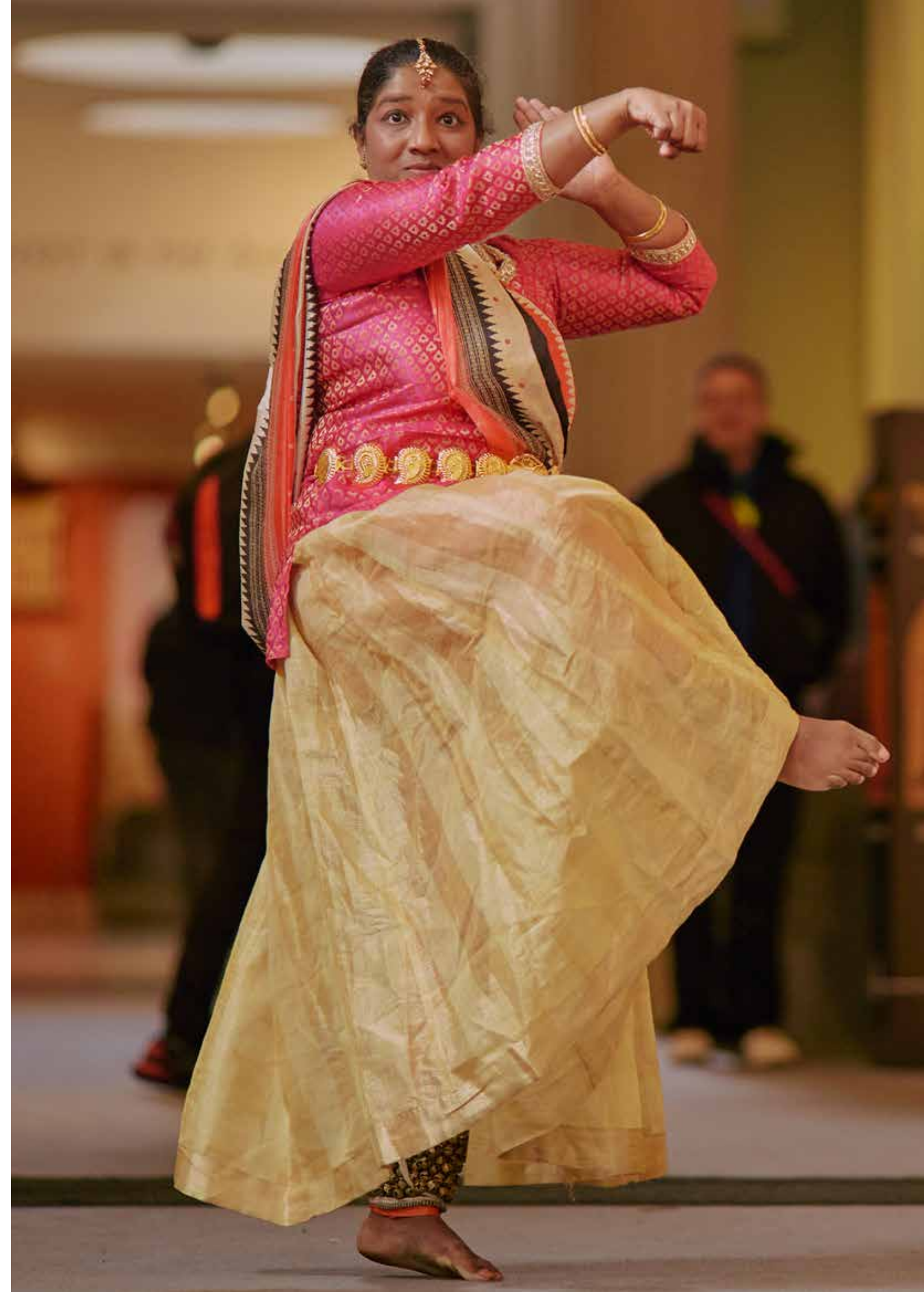
Arguably the year's most significant and lasting achievement was, however, the acquisition of Fra Angelico's *The Crucifixion*. Opportunities to acquire a painting of this quality and significance are exceptionally rare. For the Ashmolean, whose collection of early Italian painting is already a strength, the arrival of this early masterpiece deepens and transforms an already rich collection and provides a new focal point for future generations of visitors, students and scholars.

The acquisition was only possible thanks to exceptional levels of collective generosity. Public funders, trusts, foundations, longstanding supporters and first-time donors came together with remarkable speed and determination to secure the painting for the nation. The campaign demonstrated not only the affection in which the Ashmolean is held, but also the continuing belief that museums matter and that great works of art should remain publicly accessible.

Despite these two notable achievements the year has not been without its challenges and the financial environment in which we operate remains difficult. Although our overall visitor numbers reached record levels, exhibition and commercial income fell below expectations, reminding us that long-term financial resilience depends on continuing to evolve how we engage audiences and diversify our sources of support. This work is now central to our planning for the future and across the year we have continued to develop our masterplan for the building with Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios to ensure we will have the conditions, the spaces and the environment to ensure a genuinely sustainable future for the Museum.

In all that we do we depend upon extraordinary commitment of our staff and volunteers, and the generosity of those who support the Museum. During the year we celebrated not only the Fra Angelico campaign, but also the endowment of the Curator of Greek Coins, the pledge to endow the Senior Curator of Western Art, a transformative gift to support the digitisation of our Greek and Roman coin collections, and many other exceptional acts of philanthropy. Together they strengthen the Museum's ability to care for its collections, advance research and inspire audiences for generations to come.

For all this support, and to everyone who visited, volunteered, donated or championed the Museum during the year, we offer our sincere thanks.



SPOTLIGHT: FRA ANGELICO

According to the great sixteenth-century biographer Giorgio Vasari, Fra Angelico always said a prayer before taking up his paint brushes and never painted a Crucifixion without tears streaming down his cheeks. Vasari's words reveal not only the piety and devotion of the artist but also how deeply personal and important the subject of the Crucifixion was for this Dominican painter-friar. In October 2024, the Ashmolean Museum seized the exceptionally rare opportunity to acquire a panel painting of the Crucifixion c.1419–25 by Fra Angelico, one of the most celebrated artists of the Florentine Renaissance.

Born Guido di Pietro, the artist likely trained in the workshop of the leading Florentine painter, Lorenzo Monaco and his early works, including the Ashmolean's new *Crucifixion*, have often been mistakenly attributed to the hand of the older master. By 1418, however, Angelico had established his own independent practice and, sometime before 1423, he joined the Dominican convent of San Domenico in Fiesole, taking the name Fra Giovanni (Friar John). He later moved to the newly-built Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence, which he would come to decorate with some of his best-known works, a cycle of luminous devotional frescoes, most of them featuring the Crucifixion. Shortly after his death, he was praised as 'blessed' and 'angelic' for both his artistic skill and piety. He is best known in Italy to this day as Beato Angelico or 'Blessed Angelic One'.

In 1996, Francis Russell convincingly attributed the *Crucifixion* to the young Angelico, an attribution that has been largely accepted by scholars ever since. For centuries, the work formed part of the important Ashburton Collection in the UK and was never lent – remaining largely ignored or inaccessible to specialist scholars and a broader public. Today, the work is dated among the earliest of Fra Angelico's known works, and since its acquisition by the Ashmolean, it has been on public display for the first time.

The work features an emotive cast of characters, each responding differently to the death of Christ. The pleading outward gaze of the Virgin draws the viewer in, while the delicate features of the young Saint John, who clasps his hands in prayer and turns away from the viewer to look up at Jesus, suggest he is completely absorbed in his grief. By contrast, the Magdalen exhibits a very physical response, throwing herself at the foot of the cross to which she clings. Every gesture here is perfectly weighed to engage the beholder. The artist also demonstrates his keen awareness of the revolutionary works of his Tuscan sculptor-predecessors in his clever perspectival treatment of the cross. While the original patron of this work remains unknown, they must have appreciated the innovative character of the composition and have used this panel regularly, if not daily, as an aid to private devotion.



SPOTLIGHT: ROME GALLERY

In May 2025, the Ashmolean Museum proudly unveiled the newly redeveloped Early Italy and Rome galleries — a transformative project made possible through the generosity of a major philanthropic gift. This comprehensive redesign has reimagined how our exceptional collections are displayed, ensuring they are more accessible, engaging and relevant for today's audiences.

This project began not just with objects, but with people — our visitors. Guided by audience research and a carefully crafted Interpretation Brief, the galleries have been shaped around the needs and interests of non-specialist adults, academics, families and school groups.

The galleries follow a powerful narrative arc: from Early Italy and the mysterious Etruscans, through Rome's rise to power, its dominance over Italy and eventual expansion across the Mediterranean. This journey is mapped across a series of geographical zones, beginning in rural Roman Oxfordshire and extending all the way to the heart of the city of Rome and beyond.

Key themes offer insight into how the Roman Empire functioned, grew and endured for more than three centuries. Beautiful displays, hands-on activities and interactives (such as an animation of the famous Tomb

of the Leopard, or audio points where you can listen to voices from across the Roman Empire and making your own Roman recipe or handling replica pottery) bring these topics vividly to life.

Objects are no longer displayed in isolation but are there to contextualise and complement each other, with digital media and interpretive storytelling enhancing understanding along the way. Highlights include: a flythrough of ancient Rome, offering a bird's-eye view of the imperial city in its prime; a thoughtful presentation of slavery in Roman society, handled with sensitivity and historical context; and the story of the Palmyra Lady, providing a deeply personal window into identity, migration, and status in the empire.

Many of the objects on display come from the Ashmolean's Roman collection, dating from the first to the fourth centuries CE. While around 25% of previously displayed items have been rotated out, these have been replaced by significant additions from the Museum's teaching collections, alongside long-term loans from other institutions — impactful pieces that broaden and enrich the narrative, while inviting more in-gallery academic teaching.

The gallery is underpinned by key messages about life in the Roman world:



- Roman society was dynamic and deeply connected, shaped by political, cultural and geographical shifts over time.
- Despite being an empire built on conquest and slavery, Rome was also a place of cultural fusion and social mobility.
- Citizenship was defined more by participation than ethnicity, and the stories of freed individuals and rural communities are just as important as those of emperors and generals.
- Rural Oxfordshire was not peripheral — it was an active part of a broader, complex imperial network that blended local and Roman customs.

This new gallery space is not just a celebration of Rome's grandeur — it is a place for exploration, reflection and conversation. Through inclusive design and a rich mix of traditional and digital interpretation, it brings the ancient world into dialogue with the present

Redesigning and reopening the Ashmolean's Early Italy and Roman galleries was an ambitious task powered by a remarkable collaboration of creative minds, skilled hands and dedicated specialists.

At the heart of the project was Dr Paul Roberts OBE, Research Keeper of the Ashmolean's Department of Antiquities, who led the curatorial vision. Working closely with him was a cross-disciplinary team from across the Museum. Conservators ensured fragile and valuable objects were safely prepared and displayed. Interpretation specialists translated complex histories into compelling stories for a wide range of visitors, whilst designers put these stories into a physical setting. Mount makers and gallery technicians meticulously installed each object, often designing bespoke supports that gave both visibility while keeping the safety of the collections a priority.

Interactive makers, animators, and digital artists developed media experiences — from animated stories of the founding of Rome to hearing voices from the past — that spark imagination and understanding. Their work invites visitors not just to view history, but to step into it

The physical transformation was delivered by expert museum gallery builders and designers. Their aim was that every showcase, lighting fixture and display element should meet the highest standards — balancing durability, design and accessibility.

After three years of vision, creativity and dedication, the reimagined Early Italy and Rome galleries stand as a testament to what can be achieved through generous support, scholarly expertise and interdisciplinary collaboration. They offer not only a richer understanding of the ancient world but also an inspiring new space in which to encounter it



MONEY TALKS

Art and money have much in common. Both are surrounded by fluctuating ideas of value; and both can reflect the social, cultural, and political norms of the societies in which they originate. These two concepts are connected in other ways. Despite its functional form, money often starts life as an illustration or sculpture – commissioned to capture a contemporary figure, or to memorialise a given occasion – drawing on a wide range of creative skills, techniques, and inspirations. Mass-produced coins and notes become everyday artworks, immortalising people, events, and moments in time.

In turn, art can serve to capture the place of money in society. Be it a portrait of a tax collector, a defaced note, a dress formed from banknotes, or designs for an alternative currency, art depicting or using money can make a statement on the political climate and reflect aspirations for change.

Money Talks: Art, Society and Power explored money from a global perspective, considering this concept through the examination of a variety of art objects. The roles played by the commissioning process, technology, politics, and satire were discussed throughout the show, exposing the tension between the power of money and the playfulness of art to reveal fascinating social, cultural, and political narratives.



ANSELM KIEFER

In February 2025, the Ashmolean opened a major exhibition on the early work of internationally acclaimed German artist Anselm Kiefer, focusing on his paintings, drawings, photographs, woodcuts and artist books created between 1969 and 1982.

Anselm Kiefer: Early Works was the first institutional show in the UK dedicated to Kiefer's early practice. The works were on loan from the private collections of the Hall Art Foundation, which oversees museums in the US and Germany. The exhibition provided a unique opportunity to see these works in the UK – most of them for the first time. Returning to the artist's roots, the exhibition and accompanying book showcased themes, subjects and styles that have become signature to Kiefer's art, while also providing a more personal and complementary context for his large-scale installations that he is often associated with today. The early works were accompanied by recent paintings from the artist's own collection that he chose specifically for this show.

Born in 1945 in southern Germany during the final days of World War II, Anselm Kiefer was among the first generation of Germans to directly confront the country's troubled past and national identity in the wake of the Third Reich, war and Holocaust. Incorporating multi-layered references, Kiefer's unique work explores how history, literature and myth can be transformed, not only in relation to the rise of the National Socialist agenda, but also as a way to understand broader themes of civilisation, culture and spirituality. References to Norse mythology, Richard Wagner's operas, the history of German philosophy and culture, as well as the country's tradition of Romantic landscape painting are some of the recurring themes. Like the poems of Paul Celan, which Kiefer incorporates into his works, his art speaks to the spectators' inner language and addresses their subconscious, often based on collective cultural memory.



ASHMOLEAN NOW: BETTINA VON ZWEHL

From 18 October 2024 to 11 May 2025, Gallery 8 featured an exhibition of new photographs by Bettina von Zwehl (b.1971 in Munich, lives/works in London). This was the third exhibition of *Ashmolean NOW*, a series in which we invite UK-based artists to create new work inspired by the collections of the University of Oxford.

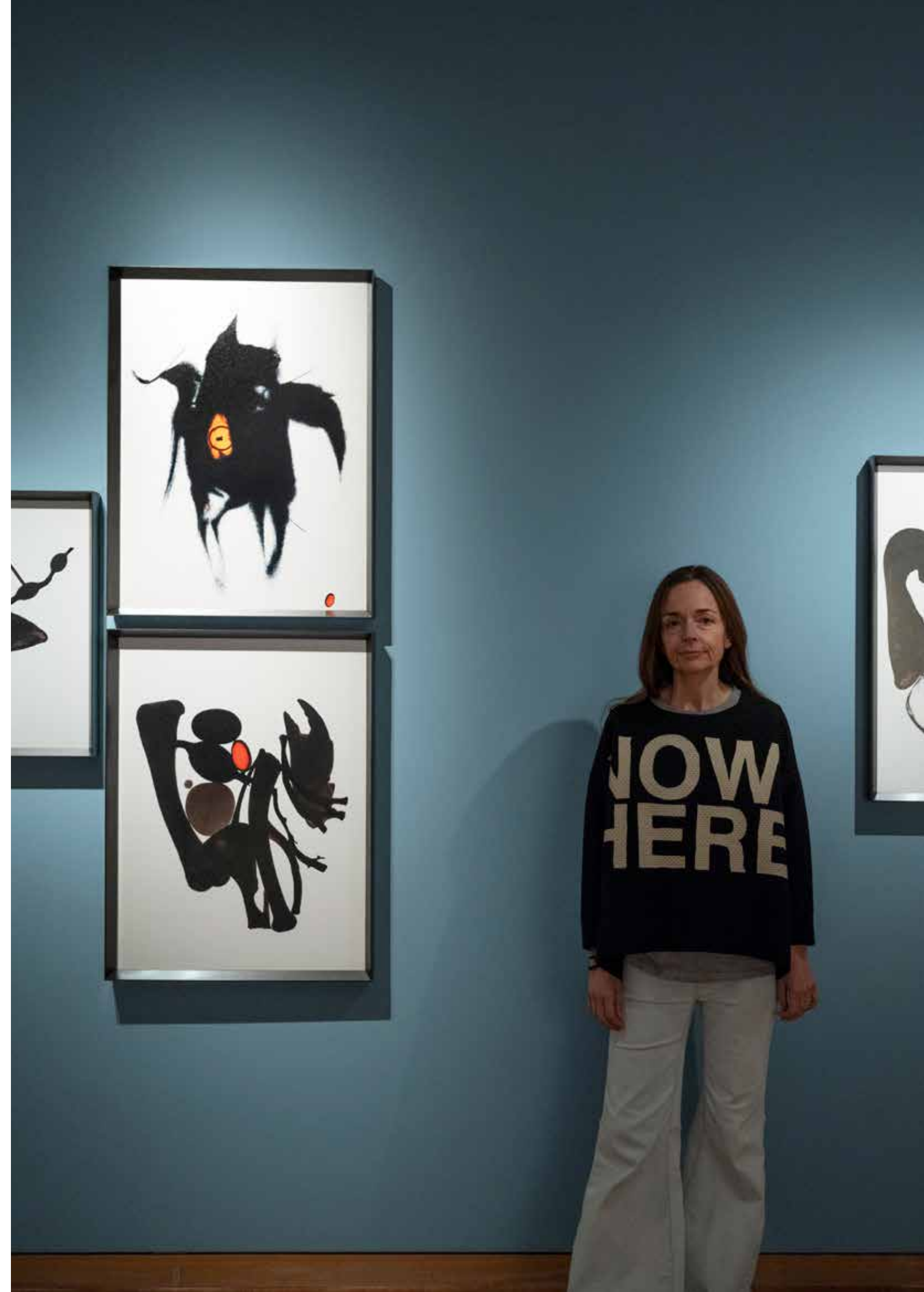
Interested in photography from a young age, Bettina von Zwehl worked as a photographer's assistant in Rome before moving to London to study for an MA in Fine Art Photography at the Royal College of Art. Often focusing on the human condition in portraiture – including distinctive profile and silhouette views – her work draws on different traditions of art history and visual culture, while experimenting with the photographic medium and its installation, playing with and continuously expanding photographic boundaries.

The Ashmolean's founding collections are based on a cabinet of curiosities or 'Wunderkammer', featuring natural and artificial rarities from various disciplines. This was established in 1628 as 'The Ark' by well-travelled gardener John Tradescant the Elder (1570–1638). The Ark was located in Tradescant's house and garden in Lambeth, south London, on the banks of the Thames, and soon became accessible to the public. John Tradescant the Younger (1608–1662) and wealthy antiquary Elias Ashmole (1617–1692) produced a

catalogue of the collection in 1656. Tradescant then gifted the collection to Ashmole, who later presented it to the University of Oxford along with his own collection to form the Ashmolean Museum.

In 2020, when devising the *Ashmolean NOW* exhibition series, which engages with new artistic voices, encourages critical conversations and invites artists to create contemporary responses to historic collections in Oxford, Bettina von Zwehl's research-led practice sprang to mind and seemed a perfect fit. She had just finished work inspired by a Wunderkammer that is still in its original location in Schloss Ambras, near Innsbruck, Austria, when we started our first conversations.

During a residency during 2022/2023, von Zwehl researched the Ashmolean's founding collections and the many narratives embedded within the historical objects. She spent countless days not only with objects at the Ashmolean but also with those at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, and talked to various curators about their collections. This served as inspiration for a unique and contemporary 'Wunderkammer'-like exhibition and accompanying book, that seamlessly transition between abstracted still life, animal portraiture, and monumental and miniature elements, as well as non-art objects from natural history collections.



ASHMOLEAN NOW: DAPHNE WRIGHT

The Irish artist and sculptor Daphne Wright, who was the focus of the fourth in the *Ashmolean NOW* series of exhibitions, first started making casts of bodies after she became a mother. According to one account, her interest in casts was sparked by seeing the casts of babies' hands and footprints in the homes of other young parents – sentimental mementoes of babyhood which Daphne, however, reacted to as 'brutal'; a brutality located in the terrifying fleetingness of infancy, made more, not less, evident by the solid cast of a foot or hand that has ceased to exist

If an interest in casting was first spurred in the living-rooms of Bristol parents, Daphne Wright's first cast sculptures were created using the language of the more obviously brutal world of animal husbandry. *Deathmask, Horace, 14 June 2003* (2003) (the cast of the head of a fallen bull) and her devastatingly poignant casts of still-born calves (mundane if usually invisible

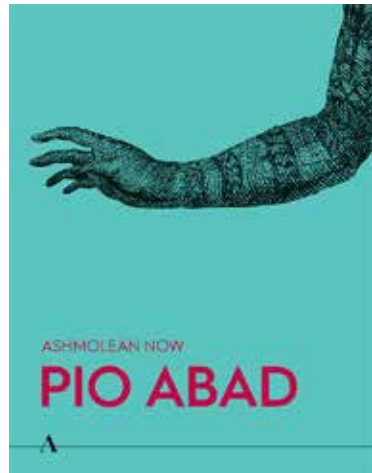
by-products of the dairy industry) were the earliest in what became a series of casts of dead animals. The series culminated in the astonishingly ambitious *Stallion* (2009) and breathtakingly moving *Primate* (2009) (the casts of a dead steeplechase horse and rhesus monkey respectively) six years later. The tradition of the death mask is a long one, traceable back to the ancient world. The practice creates the last solid imprint of an individual on the world – a physical cast presence literally filling the space created by their absence. Daphne Wright's animal casts build on that tradition while always suggesting a human presence both anthropomorphically in the animal itself, but also as the agent who brought them here, whether butcher, farmer, scientist or sculptor.

Given the origins of Daphne's casting practice it was perhaps natural that she would move from casting animals to casting her own children and from making death masks to life casts. In her first portrait of her two boys *Sons* (2011) there is the same focus on the fragile moment as they are captured on the brink of adolescence; on the edge of becoming something else. Even as she was making this sculpture Daphne was thinking about a future work, a similar portrait of her two sons on the edge of adulthood. This work *Sons on Couch* (2024/5) – finally realised thirteen years later – was the centrepiece of the Ashmolean's exhibition.

Given the work's subject matter and its means of production, it is no surprise that Daphne was drawn to the plaster casts in the Ashmolean's own collection when she was considering its exhibition in the Museum. The casts of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture frequently take the young adult male as their subject and focus on ideals of masculine beauty as epitomised by athletes, heroes and Gods. But the historic cast that Daphne has chosen to open her exhibition at the Ashmolean, is a much less obvious one – the cast of the surviving fragments of a metope from the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, showing a young beardless Hercules defeating the Nemean Lion in the first of his Labours. This is Hercules before he becomes Hercules (the Nemean lion's skin becomes one of his key attributes) just starting out on his violently heroic 'career'. The pressures of fate and the Gods – personified in the attendant figure Athena – will drive him onward, but the fragmentary nature of the sculpture now perhaps suggest different possibilities; that things are not solid and different paths might be taken. The capturing of Daphne Wright's children, now young men on the brink of their adult lives, as they sit on and around the security of the family couch, suggests a similar moment; hopeful, anxious, subject to threatening external pressures but full of possibilities.



FREE EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS

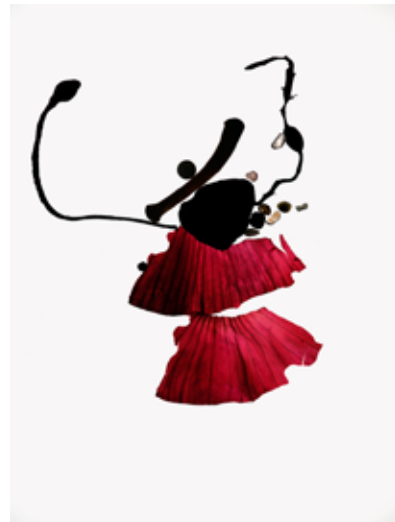


Ashmolean NOW - Pio Abad: To Those Sitting in Darkness
10 February to 8 September 2024

This exhibition features new drawings and objects by London-based artist Pio Abad (b. 1983). Deeply informed by the history of the world and particularly the Philippines, where Abad was born and raised, his works draw out transnational lines between historical incidents and people, and our lives today. Concerned with colonial history and cultural loss, Abad's works are exhibited together with select works by other artists and 'diasporic' objects chosen by the artist.

Ashmolean NOW - Bettina von Zwehl: The Flood
From 18 Oct 2024 to 11 May 2025

Third in our Ashmolean Now series, this exhibition focuses on experimental photography by Bettina von Zwehl. During her Oxford residency in 2022/23, the artist explored the early history of the Ashmolean's founding collections, some of which are now at the Natural History Museum, and in her work reflects and responds to the concept of the 'Wunderkammer' (cabinet of curiosities) as an assembly of natural and manmade wonders.



Ashmolean NOW - Daphne Wright
From 13 June to 7 Dec 2025

Curated by Xa Sturgis in collaboration with Daphne Wright (born in Ireland 1963), new works in clay and plaster will respond to the Ashmolean's rich collection of still-life paintings, as well as the Cast Gallery works.



Eastern Art Paintings Gallery (29)

Kabuki Legends
Stencil Prints by Takahashi Hiromitsu (part 2)
From 17 Feb 2024

This second rotation of colourful prints by the contemporary Japanese artist Takahashi Hiromitsu displays some further dramatic performances of kabuki theatre.

West Meets East Gallery (35)

Images of Authority: Portraits between Iran and Europe
Continues to 15 March 2026

This display explores questions of how a sitter's presence and authority is communicated by comparing the modern portraiture traditions of Iran, Britain and France. Presented for the first time in nearly a century are also two recently restored eighteenth-century Persian paintings and some intriguing facts discovered during their treatment.



Chinese Paintings Gallery (11)

Li Jin with Roger Law
From 4 May to 17 Nov 2024

This exhibition, developed in collaboration with Roger Law, presents a recent acquisition of works by Li Jin (b. 1958) and explores the friendship between these two creatives.



Cheung Yee (1936–2019) and his 1960s Hong Kong Contemporaries

11 December 2024 to 7 Sept 2025

The exhibition showcases a new acquisition of nineteen works by Cheung Yee (1936–2019) and will be the first substantial display of his work outside Hong Kong. Cheung Yee was a leading figure of innovation in the Hong Kong art scene, especially during the 1960s, when the city established its own identity as an artistic centre. His work will be shown alongside those by Lui Shou-Kwan (1919–75), thereby providing a better understanding of Hong Kong contemporary art.

Coin Gallery (7)

From Chaos to order And Back Again: Money in Renaissance Germany
Continues to 10 November 2024

Curated as a collaboration between the Ashmolean Museum and the London School of Economics, the exhibition explores how the first common currency was created in the Holy Roman Empire in the second half of the sixteenth century. Until then, regions, cities, princes would issue their own coins, which might look similar but would have differing standards depending on access to the raw materials.

From 1566 onwards the first common currency was established, whose units were clearly marked with their face values in Arab numerals and for which a common design on the front of the coin was agreed.



England Gallery (41)

The National Gallery Bicentenary display: The Wilton Diptych

10 May 2024 to 1 Sept 2024

To celebrate the bicentenary of the National Gallery opening, twelve paintings will leave Trafalgar Square (some of them for the very first time) this spring. The Ashmolean has the special pleasure of displaying the Wilton Diptych. Dating from 1395–99, the small portable altarpiece shows Richard II presented by his Patron Saint John the Baptist and Saints Edward and Edmund to the Virgin and Child.



Winston Churchill in coins & medals

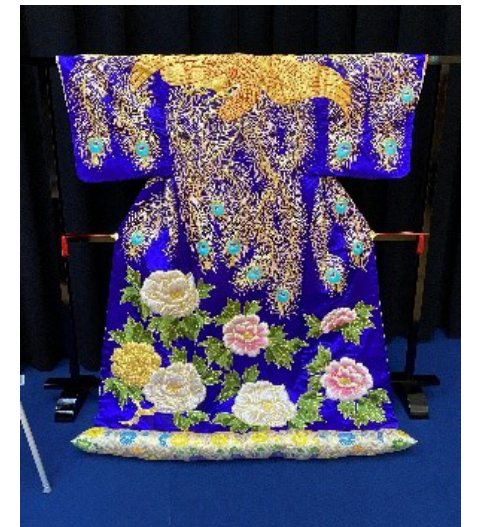
Continues to 30 Nov 2025

This display explores the life of Sir Winston Churchill through numismatic objects, in time for the anniversary of his birthday on 30 November.

Textiles Gallery (5)

Kabuki Kimono: The costumes of Bandō Tamasaburō V
from 21 November 2023 to 8 December 2024

Expanding on the theme of kabuki theatre, this temporary display in our Textiles Gallery shows spectacular kimono on loan from the famous actor, Bando Tamasaburō V, who is a highly acclaimed onnagata (performer specialising in female roles). The kimono reflect the great many and varied roles he has performed over the years, but also provide a unique insight into this very specialist production of Japanese textile art.



Ancient Middle East Gallery (19)

Demon, Mother, Maker of Kings
Continues to 15 Jun 2025

Curated by Maria Misra, Professor of Global History at Oxford and a Fellow of Keble College, this display in our changing showcase considers a group of female divinities of the ancient world, offering a glimpse into the many surprising forms of their power, from motherhood, love and fertility, to being fiercely violent and asserting political authority. Each has many different roles and functions in war, battle and death, politics, intelligence, and even navigation.

UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCES

Understanding Our Audiences: Research, Decisions and Plans

The Ashmolean has undertaken a major programme of audience research to support its transformation into a truly audience-focused institution. This work has established a shared understanding across departments. The research was structured in two phases: the first examined current onsite and online audiences, while the second focused on potential visitors who had not engaged with the Museum in the past eight years.

Segmentation

The Museum’s bespoke segmentation model identified eight key audience groups who currently engage with the Ashmolean. These include University-related audiences such as ‘Young & Curious’ and ‘Knowledgeable Professionals’, as well as broader public groups like ‘Interested Generalists’, ‘Traditionalists’, ‘Children-First Families’, and ‘Experience Seekers’. Two further segments, ‘Casual Socials’ and ‘Incidentals’, typically visit as companions and are not primary targets for audience development

To support future growth, further research was undertaken into audiences who have the potential to visit but currently do not. This revealed a general lack of awareness of the Museum’s offer, with perceived barriers including relevance, family-friendliness and practical considerations such as travel and cost. Families, in particular, highlighted the importance of consistent hands-on, engaging and accessible experiences in the permanent galleries. Additional insight into visitor journeys and ‘Children-First’ communication has already informed short-term improvements and is shaping longer-term plans.

Growing Our Audiences: Children-First, Traditionalists, and Experience Seekers

Following the success of welcoming over one million visitors, we will continue to deliver high-quality, audience-focused experiences across all segments. However, we are prioritising growth among ‘Children-First’ families, ‘Traditionalists’, and ‘Experience Seekers’, tailoring our programmes, services and communications to their specific needs and preferences.

Children-First Families

This segment values ease, clarity and a warm welcome. Their primary motivation is their children’s enjoyment and learning. The message ‘Inspiring Minds’ resonates strongly, and brand elements — including visual design,



interpretation, and imagery — are being revised to reflect this audience more authentically. Museum teams are receiving training to better welcome families, and initiatives such as multi-layered interpretation in rotating displays and offers like a free babycino with any hot drink are being piloted.

Traditionalists

To grow this segment, we are foregrounding intellectually rich themes, supported by clear historical narratives and the highest-quality objects in our exhibitions. Typically retired, Traditionalists are motivated by subject matter, the reputation of the artist or institution and artistic excellence. They prefer structured, coherent displays with authentic, text-led storytelling.

Experience Seekers

Exclusive and one-off events have proven successful in attracting this audience, who are driven by the opportunity to enjoy unique, social and memory-making experiences. We are piloting evening events such as mystery dinners, and are developing ideas for adult-only and limited-access experiences to build on this momentum.

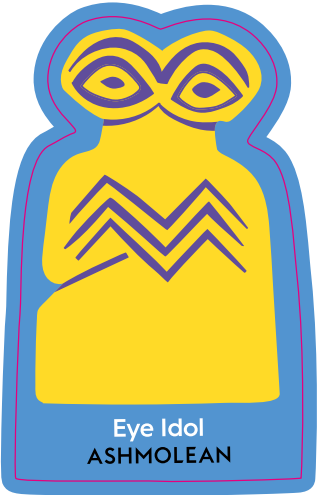
By deepening our understanding of audiences and refining our offer, we are ensuring the Ashmolean remains relevant, inclusive and inspiring.



Tengu Demon
Netsuke
ASHMOLEAN



The god Sobek
ASHMOLEAN



Eye Idol
ASHMOLEAN



Octopus Jar
ASHMOLEAN



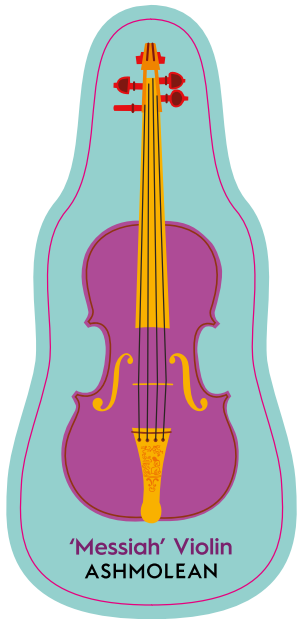
Oxford Crown
ASHMOLEAN



Guy Fawkes' Lante
ASHMOLEAN



Tengu Demon
Netsuke
ASHMOLEAN



'Messiah' Violin
ASHMOLEAN



Octopus Jar
ASHMOLEAN

PUBLIC PROGRAMMES

“Just loved it. Was captivated the whole way through. Learnt so much about the stories behind the art work... I will look at paintings now with a whole new vision.”

Public Programmes this year were shaped by two thematic seasons inspired by the collections: Change Makers (September 2024–January 2025) and Create and Transform (February–July 2025). Each season reached over 1,900 participants with themes supported through talks, performances, tours, workshops and festivals.

“What an incredible event... everything combined for a magical evening which brought the space to life in a new way.”

Adults

Change Makers emphasised artists, objects and individuals that created change alongside shifting perceptions of money and history. It featured a sold-out talk with author Sathnam Sanghera, with Dr Catherine Phipps reflecting on colonial history, identity and social change. The season also included ‘After the Impressionists’ with Juliet Heslewood, ‘Medieval Embroidery’ with Tanya Bentham and a Slow Art Tour by our Gallery Lecturers. Overall, it generated £30k, with 89% of participants rating it good or excellent.

Create and Transform explored artistic practice in shaping public narratives. 95% rated events good or excellent; 8% were first-time museum visitors, and 27% had never joined an Ashmolean event before. Highlights included ‘Edmund de Waal: Fragments, Music & Poetry Evening’, produced with the University’s Cultural Programme, including a reading and live music in the galleries. The season also featured sold-out talks with Dr Jennifer Sliwka on the new Fra Angelico acquisition, Paul Roberts on the Rome Galleries, and the Alice Foster series on Figurative to Abstract Artist Kieran Stiles’ mixed-media workshops inspired by Anselm Kiefer were repeated due to popularity.

Our Experience Leaders completed their first full year leading tours for groups alongside the Gallery Lecturers. A new *Change Makers* tour explored pivotal collection moments of change, offered to individuals, evening audiences and private groups. Together with Adult Programme Creative Producer Jude Barrett, the team supported 114 private group bookings.

Outreach for older adults continued, with sessions for Banbury History Society, Green Gates Care Home & South Oxfordshire Older People’s Group. We also supported GLAM initiatives, including ‘Meet Me’ and ‘Time for a Cuppa’, and expanded relaxed art groups and tours.

Families

The Family Programme centred on two major festivals, a regular Early Years programme and family tours which reached 574 participants this year. New development work began to encourage regular family visitors.

In February, the ‘One World Festival’ welcomed over 12,000 visitors, with 96% rating the event good or excellent. 28% were first-time Ashmolean visitors and 61% first-time event attendees. Co-curated with community partners, it offered 28+ interactive activities and performances, reflecting Oxfordshire’s cultural diversity. Partners included Asylum Welcome, Dialogue Society, Oxford Hindu Temple, Oxford Jewish Congregation and others.

“Essential to have an international and multicultural outlook in a world of growing intolerance. Well set up for the whole family.”

The *Festival of Archaeology* (19 July) drew 5,000+ visitors in one day, with hands-on Roman-themed activities: mosaics, storytelling, games and traders. 90% of those surveyed rated the event as good or excellent, and 37% were first-time Ashmolean visitors.

“Engaging, hands-on activities for all ages – we stayed much longer than expected.”

Monthly Baby Bundle and Toddler Time programmes continued with strong uptake, offering storytelling, singing and gallery-based sessions. Free places were offered through social prescribing. Contributors included curators, baby massage practitioners and music specialists. Toddler Time featured in a research project by Oxford DPhil student Vicky Hulks, with findings presented at the *Museum Next Museums, Games and Play Summit* (Sept 2024).





TEACHING

Building on existing partnerships, the Ashmolean continues to develop a curriculum-based schools offer that embeds the Museum's Research strands into the learning of local and national school pupils.

Into the Blue

In July 2024, the Ashmolean welcomed 420 primary and 160 Year 7 students from Gloucestershire for 'Into the Blue', a guided tour exploring blue pigments in art and objects. Delivered in collaboration with the Oxford University Chemistry Department, participating schools were selected for having above-average Free School Meal entitlement.

Inspiring Growing Minds

The 'Inspiring Growing Minds' project continues to deliver impactful learning outcomes for local secondary schools through the co-creation of embedded resources with school partners. History and Art strands are being developed with Cheney School, who visited with over 300 History and 30 Art students in July 2025. A science-based strand on mass



spectrometry, created with Greyfriars Catholic School, the Ashmolean Museum's Conservation Department, and the Oxford University Chemistry Department, is also underway. This project is generously supported by an anonymous donor and friend to the Ashmolean.

Exhibition Student Project – This is What Your Get

To mark the Ashmolean's 2025 exhibition *This Is What You Get*, Cheney School students created artistic responses to Radiohead's music and art. Students worked collaboratively, reflecting the processes of Stanley Donwood and Thom Yorke to produce poetry, painting, video, photography and song. These Year 11 and 12 students also worked with Ashmolean staff to write interpretation labels for their responses. Their work is featured on the Ashmolean Museum's website.

Work Experience

The Schools team hosted 13 work experience students from Greyfriars Catholic School and Oxford Spire Academy, with a further three hosted by other departments. With above-average pupil premium levels, both schools have student populations which include groups typically underrepresented in museums. After a week packed with activities, including cataloguing Iron Age moulds and a tour of Paper Conservation, students described the Museum as "mind-opening", "essential" and "inspiring".

At a Glance:

- 14,001 pupils participated in 530 sessions taught by Museum staff
- 21,026 pupils participated in 873 self-guided group sessions at the Museum

211 teachers received teacher training at the Museum



RESEARCH

This year has yielded an impressive array of research projects spanning art history, archaeology, heritage science, digital humanities and museum studies. Many have been conducted collaboratively with prestigious institutions, including Durham University, Yale, the University of Toronto and the British School at Athens. National and international partnerships continue to be a defining aspect of the Ashmolean Museum’s research initiatives, alongside robust interdisciplinary collaborations.

Projects have harnessed advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), and other sophisticated imaging and analytical techniques to uncover previously hidden narratives within the collections. The ongoing digitisation of the Museum’s holdings has resulted in an increasing number of artworks being catalogued and photographed, offering unprecedented access to new knowledge for all.

Collectively, these projects have made significant contributions to their respective fields, whether through ground-breaking discoveries, the expansion of datasets, or the careful preservation and analysis of historical artefacts. These achievements have been widely disseminated via peer-reviewed publications, conferences, and exhibitions, further enhancing the Museum’s reputation as a centre of research excellence.

The Raphael Drawings Project

Angelamaria Aceto

Research towards a catalogue of drawings by Raphael and his school has continued in earnest. Led by Senior Researcher Angelamaria Aceto, the project puts at its core Raphael’s drawings as archaeological objects, the artist’s own practical manipulation of drawings, as well as investigating their material life beyond the workshop. The last twelve months have led to new important discoveries about the provenance and collecting history of the drawings, as well as Raphael’s own career. The research results have been showcased in peer-reviewed articles and shared with a variety of audiences at international conferences and academic seminars. As the writing enters its final year, the book’s structure has now taken shape, and its content is greatly benefiting from the collaboration of colleagues across GLAM and internationally. Among them, 3D imaging carried out by the Bodleian Library / Factum Arte, Madrid, has revealed previously unseen marks that throw new light on Raphael’s own working and creative processes.



Raphael (1483–1520), *Studies of Two Apostles for the Transfiguration*, c.1519–20. Black chalk with faint white chalk highlights, 9.9 x 36.4 cm. WA1846.209

RPC & EpiDoc & AI

Joe Sheppard

This year the RPC EpiDoc project has successfully expanded, translated into English, and encoded digital editions of the Greek, Latin, and Phoenician inscriptions (c. 150,000) on all known types of provincial coins minted in the Roman Empire. The project is the first major numismatic reference work to apply the methods of epigraphy and papyrology to coin legends, thereby making accessible to a wider public audience precisely the kind of enhanced information necessary for understanding a difficult dataset characterised by such challenges as abbreviations, fragments, linguistic variations and cryptic symbols. The speed of such an outcome was made possible by the innovative deployment of a fine-tuned AI model trained specifically on a sample of the provincial coins, so the project has demonstrated proof of concept for future initiatives, as well as producing a rich and highly structured new dataset.

At a fundamental level, this process has forced to the surface – and resolved – many of the textual ambiguities, gaps in knowledge and historical links otherwise obscured by traditional numismatic practices.

By focusing systematically on these objects through the lens of writing, however, new insights into linguistic phenomena are also emerging, such as regional and chronological variations in spelling, pronunciation and vocabulary. For example, the word ‘Nicomedians’ can be tagged as a demonym that identifies the citizens of Nicomedia, while the word ‘Severus’ can be easily tagged as the name of a person, the name of an emperor, and finally the name of the historical figure known as Septimius Severus.



Septimius Severus, *Æ* minted by Nicomedia, 195/6–198 AD, copper alloy, 3.4 cm. HCR148343

Ruskin’s Painting Materials

is a pioneering four-year analytical study aimed at exploring the influence of the Industrial Revolution on the material choices of nineteenth-century artists. Centred on watercolour pigments in the Ruskin Teaching Collection, this research is the first of its kind to conduct a comprehensive chemical characterisation survey of works by John Ruskin and his contemporaries to answer questions on adoption, use and stability of newly developed synthetic pigments.



John Ruskin, *Study of a Kingfisher*, before 1872. Pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 25.8 x 21.8 cm. WA.RS.RUD.201

This year, an additional 100 watercolour paintings have undergone pigment identification and condition assessment using the suite of cutting-edge analytical techniques (MA-XRF, XRD, IRR, RTI, FORS and 3D microscopy) in the Conservation department and by partner Professor Beeby, Durham University, bringing the total to 175 objects over the course of the project. Research has focused on two strands. ‘Preserving Turner’ investigates pigments used in reproductions of faded watercolours by JMW Turner.

Results indicate that Ruskin chose lightfast pigments to recreate Turner’s works, rather than faithfully reproducing his materials, in a deliberate attempt to preserve the original image. ‘Blue Revolution’ examines the chemistry and impact of new blue pigments that flooded the market in the nineteenth century. During this time chemists and pigment suppliers sought to emulate ultramarine, the prohibitively expensive ‘perfect blue’ made from lapis lazuli, a semi-precious stone mined in Afghanistan, and create alternatives to fugitive blues such as indigo and Prussian blue. Significantly, systematic analysis of this extensive collection has enabled the mapping of undocumented blues, adulterations of formulas and adoption of colours by artists through the century, enabling a full assessment of impact of the ‘blue boom’ on material practice.

Reconstructing the 1936 BSA Exhibition using the Ashmolean’s Sir Arthur Evans Archive

Andrew Shapland

In 1936, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the British School at Athens, a major exhibition was held at the Royal Academy in London, ‘British Archaeological Discoveries in Greece and Crete 1886 to 1936’. Sir Arthur Evans, excavator of Knossos and former Keeper of the Ashmolean, curated the Minoan Room (pictured). The Department of Antiquity’s



The Minoan Room at the Royal Academy of Arts exhibition of British Archaeological Discoveries in Greece and Crete, 1936

Sir Arthur Evans Archive holds around 200 of the original exhibition labels, which were digitised by Renée Trepagnier, the Ashmolean/Bristol Collaborative Doctoral Partnership student. The Minoan Room was then reconstructed digitally, drawing on archival material in Oxford and the British School at Athens (a partner in the project). A new digital publication on the Ashmolean website reunites the labels with the objects in the exhibition, most of which were loans from the Ashmolean. It includes a catalogue of the objects and exhibition labels which links to their Collections Online records, helping to contextualise them. A workshop with scholars from the UK and abroad was held in May 2025 to present the results of the project and understand the 1936 exhibition from different angles. The project was funded by TORCH (the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities).

Chromotope

Matthew Winterbottom

Chromotope, a six-year interdisciplinary research project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) draws to a close in September 2025. This is a pioneering multi-institutional partnership (Sorbonne Université, Ashmolean Museum and Faculty of English, Oxford University, with the support of the CNAM). Chromotope explores what happened to colour in the 19th century, and notably how the 'chromatic turn' of the 1850s mapped out new ways of thinking about colour in literature, art, science and technology throughout Europe. Major achievements include the Ashmolean exhibition *Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion and Design* (2023–24) and the accompanying catalogue. The 'Colour Matters' academic conference was held in Oxford in December 2023. A closing conference 'Chromatic Encounters: Experiencing Colour from Early Modern Literature to Modernism' was held at the Sorbonne in June 2025. Matthew Winterbottom, Ashmolean Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture was co-investigator for the research project and co-curator of *Colour Revolution*. In November 2025 the Chromotope team presented at the annual conference of the International Japonisme Society in Tokyo.



Expanding the Canon of Qajar Art: An Interdisciplinary Conservation and Research Project

Francesca Leoni

During 2024–25 Dr Leoni's main research focus was the completion of the project 'Expanding the Canon of Qajar Art: An Interdisciplinary Conservation and Research Project', which has been supported since 2023 by the British Institute for Persian Studies, the Flora Foundation, the Yadiran Foundation, the Persian Heritage Foundation, the Pilgrim Trust and anonymous donors. In addition to the retouching and reglazing of the two Qajar paintings at the heart of the project, a considerable degree of research in UK archives (Edinburgh, London, Southampton) was undertaken to uncover more of their provenance and recent history. This, the conservation and the result of the scientific analyses, are detailed in a multi-authored article that will be submitted for peer review later this year. Other recent outcomes from this project include the exhibition 'Images of Authority: Portraits between Iran and Europe,' which has been on view in Gallery 29, at the Ashmolean since 1 March 2026 (until March 2026).

South Asian Archives Research and Digital Access Project

As part of the South Asian Archives Research and Digital Access Project, work on the documentation and digitisation of onsite materials from the Eastern Art's five South Asian archival collections continued, with the support of volunteers. The first wave of MuseumPlus and DAMS imports have taken place, with records created for most of the Impey archive, including the photographic negatives at its core. These items can now be viewed through Collections Online, with record images hopefully soon to be replaced by higher-quality digitisations. Thirty new albumen prints have been made from these hi-res scans of Impey negatives, and these will form the basis of an upcoming exhibition in Gallery 29. An edited volume of essays has also been prepared for publication alongside this exhibition, which will open in April 2026. Following a successful John Fell funding application to develop an international research network, a workshop has been organised for September 2025. Bringing together curators to facilitate exploration of South Asian collections in museums, especially the Ashmolean, it will include discussions of archive research and collections digitisation, and assess the (colonial) history of and developments in the study of South Asian art and collections.

Opposite: Eugene Clutterbuck Impey (1830–1904), Maharaja of Jodhpur seated on lion-throne holding sword, 1865–73



DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Global Access to our Collections

In the past year, we have continued to focus on developing our digital infrastructure to ensure our collections can be accessed by users around the world for research, teaching and learning.

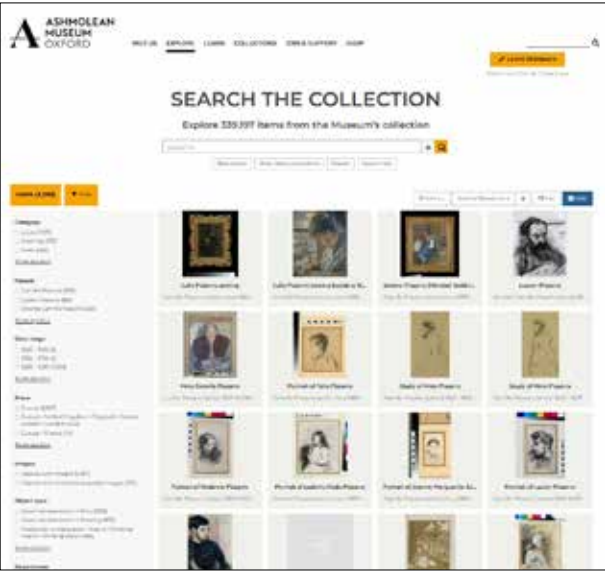
Collections Online

Our online collection has welcomed over 100,000 visitors and surpassed 1 million page views since its relaunch in December 2023.

With over 340,000 collection records accessible online – an additional 40,000 items since last year) – and growing daily, this platform allows anyone with an internet connection to search, explore and discover the Museum’s growing digital catalogue, whether researching on their laptop at university or scrolling on a smartphone at home.

Having successfully implemented a range of improvements behind-the-scenes this year, to ensure seamless connections between a variety of relevant source and middleware systems, another phase of development is being planned for next year that will bring design and functionality enhancements to site users.

The Ashmolean’s digital collections now also feature on national aggregation portals such as the Museums Data Service, which serves Art UK, among others.



Digitisation

Our major programme of digitisation, which aims to catalogue and image the Museum’s entire collection (around 1.25 million items), has continued in earnest this year. Thanks to generous donations and grants, we have been able to continue major projects across all curatorial departments. Much of this activity involves willing teams of volunteers facilitating our mass digitisation workflows. We have also been experimenting with AI and investigating ways to evolve our operations to scale up digitisation even further in the future.

Coins and Medals

This project aims to digitise and catalogue the Museum’s entire collection of coins, paper money, tokens, jetons and medals using a state-of-the-art mass-digitisation workflow.

In the last year, we have redeveloped the Museum’s coin-capture software and processed another 14,000 records for upload to our online tool for coin cataloguing (hcr.ashmus.ox.ac.uk). This platform now contains over 142,000 Coin Room records, and over 40,000 of these are fully published on the Museum’s Collections Online platform.



Ancient Greek coin, 480–470 BCE. HCR42827

Thanks to major philanthropic funding, we have also been able to kickstart an ambitious initiative to accelerate the digitisation of our collection of Graeco-Roman coinage.

Prints

The digitisation and cataloguing of our collection of 200,000 portrait and topographical prints – amassed by British naturalists Reverend Frederick William Hope (1797–1862) and his wife Ellen (1801–1879) – has continued at pace this year thanks to generous funding from Jacqueline and Richard Worswick as well as other supporters.

Having focused on digitisation, the portraits of British and European sitters, mainly literary figures and artists, we have now moved onto the topographical prints, largely featuring views of cities and counties across England.

This year, we have created 30,000 new records and enhanced a further 30,000. A total of 72,500 prints from the Hope Collection are now available online.

Archives

The May Hamilton Beattie Archive comprises 30,000 slides and negatives, 1,000 books and pamphlets, 120 carpets and weavings and over 45,000 paper records documenting the life-long research career



of this pioneering carpet scholar. This year, we have completed the scanning and cataloguing of 22,000 items from this collection, which have been imported into internal systems ahead of refinement for online publication.

The digitisation of the Sir Arthur Evans Archive has also continued thanks to a grant from the Headley Trust. This collection comprises over 23,500 items, including archaeological notebooks and diaries, fresco drawings and architectural plans, photographs and glass plate negatives and other professional and personal papers. Another 5,300 records of photographs and professional papers from this archive have been created this year



Émile Gilliéron père (1850–1924), restoration of the Saffron Gatherer fresco, Knossos. Undated. Watercolour on paper, 26 x 47 cm.

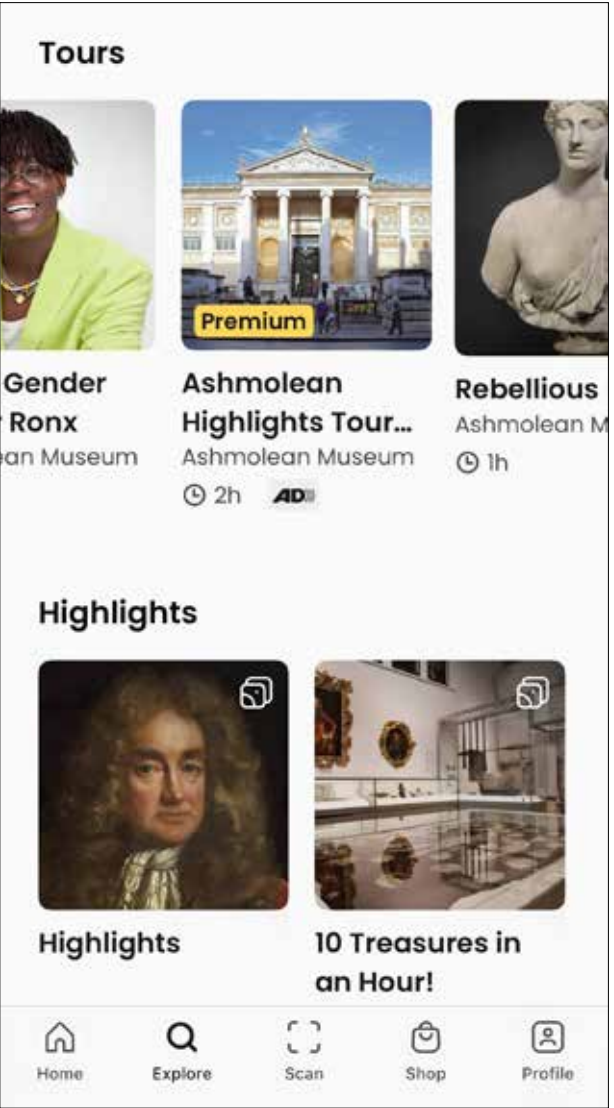
DIGITAL CONTENT

It has been an exciting year for digital content and communications. We welcomed even more visitors than before to our website, surpassed 420,000 social media followers and released some of our most successful online content

Our annual Advent calendar reached record numbers, through email, the website and social media, and we shared curator-led films exploring the work of Anselm Kiefer and Bettina von Zwehl. We also celebrated JMW Turner in his 250th anniversary year, through social media and website stories, and we continued to share short animations commissioned from young animators, including one inspired by a sleeping cat on a nineteenth-century Japanese fan-painting. Our 'Ashmolean Meets the Met Gala' post in May – in which we match

Met Gala outfits to objects from the collection – was received extremely well, and the Museum's successful campaign to save an early Crucifixion by Fra Angelico for the public featured heavily in our communications at the end of 2024.

During the year, we worked on a brand-new partnership with History Hit to develop a six-part documentary series titled 'The Ashmolean Up Close'. The series takes the viewer behind the scenes of the Museum to discover precious and surprising objects. The films are hosted by Dan Snow and Suzannah Lipscomb, and feature Ashmolean curators, conservators and the Museum's Director. Ashmolean Members and History Hit subscribers are enjoying exclusive access to the episodes before they are released on YouTube later in 2025.



We have also been exploring new outputs for digital content and have released two pilot podcast episodes on Fun Kids Radio, a UK radio station for children. The results of the two 15-minute audio cartoons will help inform and shape our approach to audio projects for families moving forward.

We continue to develop our audio guides for visitors, which are available to listen on site at the Museum but also from anywhere else in the world. This year, more than 10,400 users listened to the audio guides, which include a Highlights Guide and a Myths and Reality Tour with Janina Ramirez.

In addition, in early 2025, after much work behind the scenes, we went live with a new audience data management system and email marketing platform. Since launch, we have surpassed 200,000 email newsletter subscribers and have been able to send more than 4,000 newly-designed automated emails each month to ticketholders and Members. We have also welcomed a new role to the team – an Email and Data Officer – as the new systems offer new opportunities to develop tailored content strategies and continue to grow our audiences and engagement.



SUSTAINABILITY

The Museum continues to embed environmental sustainability across our operations, exhibitions and visitor experiences. In 2024–25, we built on previous initiatives with a range of new actions aimed at reducing our environmental impact and preparing for the challenges of climate change.

We engaged with our top suppliers to better understand their environmental commitments and began working with Central Purchasing to develop a long-term approach to sustainable procurement.

We launched a Museum-wide recycling project, removing under-desk bins and installing clearly marked recycling stations for staff and visitors. This was supported by a targeted recycling awareness campaign to encourage responsible waste disposal and improve recycling rates.

In our exhibitions work, we developed an initial carbon footprinting model and introduced a carbon tax for object loans. We also started work to send object loan cases to be reused — helping to create butterfly houses, beehives and hedgehog houses. We opened our new conservation display with a focus on lighting and sustainability, helping to raise visitor awareness.

We began exploring our digital carbon footprint and will host our first digital clean-up event in September,

aimed at reducing unnecessary data storage and energy use. To promote biodiversity, we replaced planters throughout the Museum with species selected to support pollinators and local ecosystems. Alongside this, we undertook a biodiversity baseline assessment to help us measure the impact of future interventions and track progress over time.

Looking ahead, we developed future climate adaptation scenarios to help the Museum plan for the potential impacts of climate change. These scenarios will inform strategic planning and resilience measures in the coming years.

We continued to offer Carbon Literacy Training to staff and created a new sustainability card game to help colleagues explore what sustainability means for the Museum. Externally, we've shared our learning and experiences at conferences such as the Association of Independent Museums and the Fit for the Future Network.

Together, these initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to environmental responsibility and our role in supporting the University of Oxford's wider sustainability goals. We remain focused on reducing our carbon footprint, enhancing biodiversity, and building resilience for the future.



OUR SUPPORTERS

The Ashmolean Collective

In March 2025, the Museum launched the Ashmolean Collective, a new social group for art enthusiasts interested in supporting the Ashmolean’s ambitious modern and contemporary art programme. The Collective meets four times a year, enjoying exclusive access to the Museum’s collections, special London gallery events and curated programmes.

After a celebratory gathering in March to mark the start of this new initiative, its events programme began in earnest. In May, members enjoyed a special curator’s tour of the Ashmolean’s *Cheung Yee* exhibition. In June, they gathered at Gasworks in London for a lively evening of contemporary art, which was warmly received by all who attended. Looking ahead, members will enjoy a private viewing of *This Is What You Get* in September, followed by a special Oxford visit in October that promises further inspiring encounters with contemporary art.

We are proud to report that the Collective’s inaugural year has laid a strong foundation for supporting the Museum’s contemporary programming against the backdrop of the world’s oldest public museum.

Our Patrons

This year, our Patrons once again played an essential role in supporting the Ashmolean. Through The Elias Ashmole Trust, grants totalling £200,000 contributed to the acquisition of Fra Angelico’s *Crucifixion* and supported key exhibitions, including *Money Talks: Art and Currency* and *Anselm Kiefer: Early Works*. The Trust also continued its support for *Ashmolean NOW*, Gallery 8, and the special loan display of the *Wilton Diptych* from the National Gallery.

Thanks to the commitment and generosity of our Patrons, over £2 million was raised to secure the acquisition of Fra Angelico’s *Crucifixion*, ensuring that this masterpiece can be enjoyed at the Ashmolean for generations to come.

Alongside their philanthropic support, our Patrons enjoyed a memorable Spring Tour to Turin, with highlights including private visits to the Palazzo Reale’s Print Room and the renowned Museo Egizio. Looking ahead, the Patrons’ programme promises further exceptional opportunities, with an upcoming tour to Tokyo and Kyoto in 2025 and, in early 2026, a visit to Florence to coincide with the landmark exhibition *Fra Angelico* at the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and the Museo di San Marco.

Membership

This past year, we welcomed over 2,100 Members in person and online to our Members’ events programme. Highlights include a micro-pilgrimage from Christ Church to the Ashmolean, a special demonstration and talk with renowned *kintsugi* master Kiyokawa Hiroki, guided tours of the Cast Gallery, new Rome Gallery and Conservation Studios, visits to Magdalen College Chapel and Chenies Manor House, as well as our ever-popular calendar of hybrid lectures covering a wide breadth of topics from Roman coinage through to twentieth-century British artists.

Ashmolean Membership became the first team within GLAM to go live with the new customer relationship management (CRM) system in October 2024. Along with the full rollout of a new emailing system in early 2025, this has allowed us to reach high levels of efficiency in our everyday processes, so we can prioritise improving other areas of the Member experience.

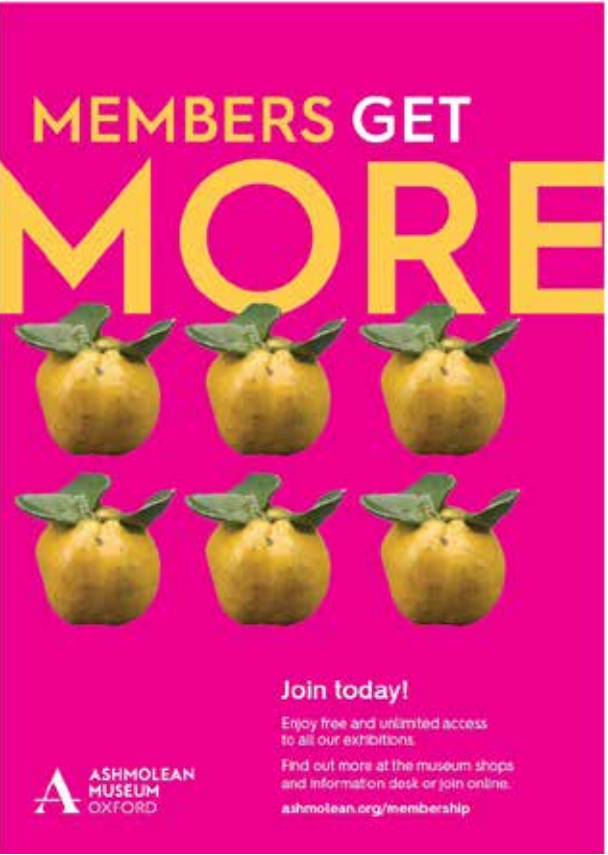
In May 2025, we introduced a 3.8% rise in membership fees, which were last increased over two years ago in February 2023. We have also launched a fresh look for Membership in spring 2025, already seen in leaflets and posters across the Museum, as well as in social media ad campaigns. Over the next two years, we will also be gradually replacing physical assets with the new designs.

Volunteers

Over the past year, our incredible team of volunteers have dedicated over 12,716 hours supporting the Museum across a variety of functions and teams. 88 Welcome Volunteers gave 5,880 hours greeting and supporting visitors to have the best possible experience by orienting, informing and offering resources and activities. Over 2,300 visitors attended 314 volunteer-led tours, while 1,931 visitors, including 544 children, had the opportunity to handle and learn about historic coins in the Money Gallery with the help of our Hands-on Coins volunteers at 80 object handling sessions.

Behind the scenes, volunteers have dedicated over 4,826 hours enhancing the work of the Museum, including 3,249 hours digitising collections and 179 hours supporting the Conservation team in taking care of objects.

To support our volunteers in turn, Ashmolean Volunteers have spent 660 hours in training delivered by the Museum to equip them with the tools they need to carry out their roles effectively, as well as provide opportunities to learn about the Museum and develop their skills.



COMMERCIAL STORIES

2024/25 presented challenges for self-generated income, primarily due to a less popular exhibition programme compared with previous years, combined with broader economic pressures. Despite these headwinds, our commercial teams delivered a number of successes worthy of celebration.

Our Venue Hire team had a strong year, hosting over 280 events across the Museum’s spaces. The year launched with a successful wedding showcase, which significantly boosted bookings for both weddings and private celebrations. Corporate events also performed well, contributing to an income result that exceeded budgetary expectations. The team’s commitment to service and innovation has ensured that the Ashmolean remains a sought-after destination for both private and corporate events.

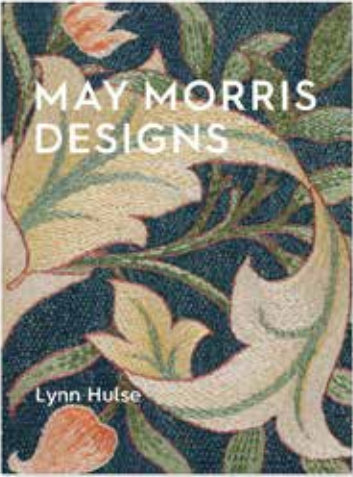
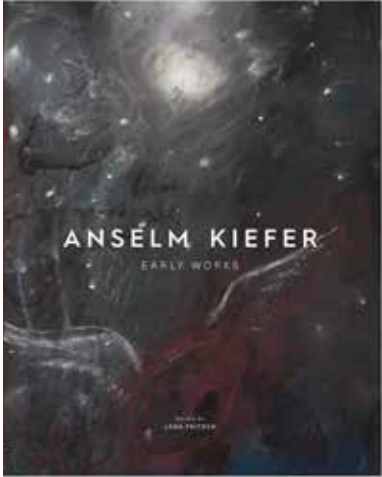
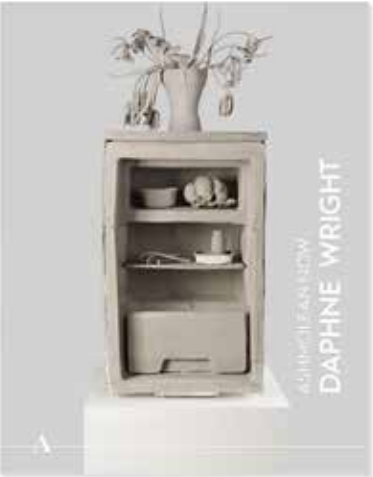
In our Lower Ground Floor gift shop, we introduced a festive product range inspired by the *Ashmolean Crossing Cultures, Crossing Time* print. This design pays tribute to global artistic heritage, incorporating elements from Japanese printmaker Hisui Sugiura, fifteenth-century Iranian pottery, and Javanese Batik textiles discovered in Egypt. Sustainably produced, the collection featured Christmas cards, decorations, crackers, tableware, textiles, hampers, and other gifting items - becoming one of our most successful Christmas ranges to date.

Following the 2023 migration to a new e-commerce platform, we expanded our product offer and enhanced marketing efforts, resulting in a 27% year-on-year increase in online shop sales for 2024/25.

Our rooftop restaurant and café teams delivered a solid performance, supported by refreshed seasonal menus, enhanced service training, and strengthened supplier relationships. Notably, our collaborations with Benugo and Dark Horse Roastery led to another successful year for the forecourt pop-up, adding energy and visibility to the Museum’s entrance. These initiatives underpinned a stable year for our catering operation.

This year marked the Ashmolean’s debut at Brand Licensing Europe, the leading event for the European licensing industry. Our presence elevated the Museum’s brand profile internationally and led to several new licensing partnerships. Simultaneously, our publishing team released eight new Ashmolean titles, while the Picture Library processed 5,785 image requests, with 75% supporting academic or research purposes — strengthening both revenue and engagement.

We continued to advance our commitment to sustainable and ethical practices across all commercial areas. This included refining supplier assessments, improving product categorisation, and achieving certifications such as the Sustainable Weddings Alliance. We work exclusively with responsible suppliers and collaborate with sustainability experts, including Impactt and 3Adapt to uphold high ethical and environmental standards. Online orders are shipped using reused and recyclable packaging, and materials are regularly reviewed to align with sector-wide improvements.



ACQUISITIONS

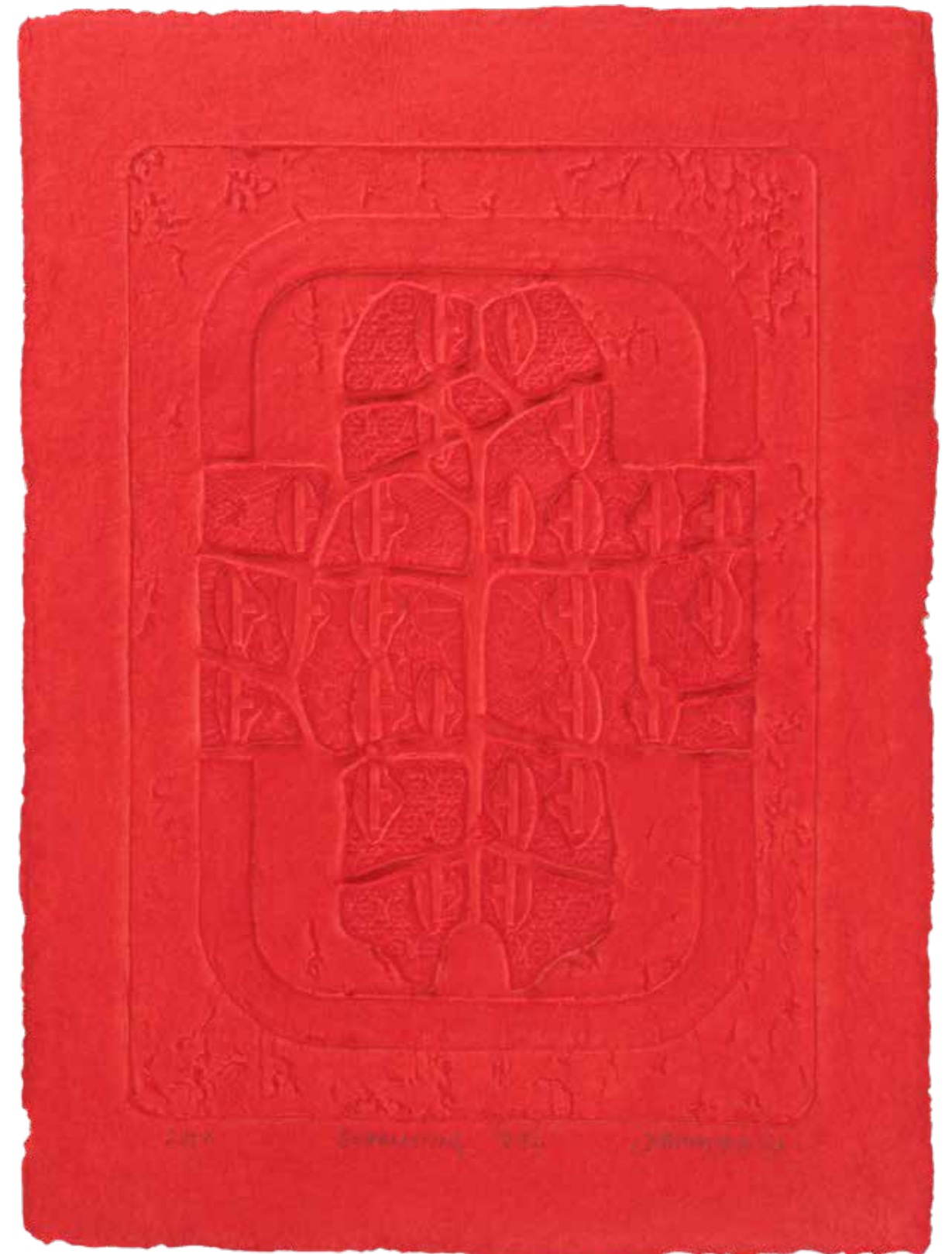
Fifteenth-century book-shaped bead.
Gold, 1.3 x 1.9 cm. AN2025.3

The Department of Antiquities has acquired a fifteenth-century gold rosary bead via the Treasure Process with the generous support from the Elias Ashmole Trust, Art Fund, and the Bomford Bequest Trust Fund. The unique iconographic bead is in the form of an open book, with the pages engraved with the images of St Leonard (left) and St Margaret (right). Found in Sheriff Hutton, North Yorkshire, AN2025.3.



Cheung Yee (1936–2019), *Everlasting*, 1977. Relief on cast red paper, 35 x 26 cm. EA2024.170 © The Artist's Estate

Cheung Yee was a leading innovator in 1960s Hong Kong, when the city established its own identity as an artistic centre. He was both a sculptor and printmaker, and his printmaking in particular shows his interest in divination. These works are among nineteen acquired from the estate of Ashmolean benefactor John Warner, Director of the Hong Kong Museum of Art from 1962–76.



Cheung Yee (1936–2019), *Family*, 1966. Wood, burned and stained, 70 x 35 x 15 cm. EA2024.171. © The Artist's Estate

Ali Kazim (b.1979), *Untitled (Votive objects) I*, 2024. Clay stupas. EA2024.258.1-13.
Presented by the artist. © Ali Kazim, courtesy Jhaveri Contemporary

Inspired by the Ashmolean's collection of Buddhist reliquaries and votive stupas from across Pakistan, India and Tibet, Kazim transforms early stone, metal and terracotta works into three-dimensional miniature forms in terracotta red. These beautiful and tactile miniature terracotta sculptures mimic the ancient shapes in clay, but do not demand interpretation. This set was created specifically for his 2022 solo exhibition at the Ashmolean.



Joydeb Roaja (b.1973). *Generation Wish Yielding Tress and Atomic Tree 59*, 2022. Ink pen on paper. 60 x 42 cm. EA2024.256. © The Artist

Purchased with the assistance of the North Fund. Joydeb Roaja engages in a multidisciplinary practice encompassing performance, painting and drawing, which mirrors the complex social and political context of Bangladesh. His work portrays indigenous individuals existing alongside military forces and weaponry, thereby referencing the historical military involvement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Roaja's art serves as a powerful call for self-determination and the protection of marginalised cultures.

Raku Kichizaemon XV (b. 1949). *Yū (things that are blue and float in time-space)*, 2022. Yakinuki-type 'White Rock' Raku tea bowl. 12 x 16 x 9.7 cm EA2024.160

Acquired from Annely Juda Fine Arts through the generosity of Christopher Gorman-Evans. A spectacular tea bowl by leading Japanese ceramicist Raku Kichizaemon XV has entered the Ashmolean's Japanese collection thanks to the generosity of collector Christopher Gorman-Evans. *Yū* is one of a group of tea bowls inspired by the music of twentieth-century Japanese composer Takemitsu Tōru. Its dramatically sculpted form and bold use of colour demonstrate a radical reinterpretation of the 400-year-old Raku artistic tradition.



Yoshida Hiroshi (1876–1950), *The Palace at Udaipur*, 1931. Colour woodblock print, 40.1 x 27.6 cm. EA2024.23. Purchased with the assistance of the Story Fund

With the support of the Story Fund, we acquired nine woodblock prints of India by the celebrated Japanese print artist Yoshida Hiroshi. Initially trained in European oil and watercolour painting, Yoshida shifted his focus to woodblock printmaking in the 1920s, producing exquisite prints with a translucent, layered quality reminiscent of watercolours. These prints are from a series of 32 works created after trip to India in 1931.



Vase and cover, attributed to the Vauxhall Porcelain Manufactory (1752–63), about 1755, soft-paste porcelain with underglaze cobalt decoration, 65.3 x 35 x 33.5 cm with cover. WA2024.15. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax from the estate of Anthony du Boulay and allocated to the Ashmolean Museum, 2024. Ashmolean Museum

This vase, described as ‘one of the great pots of the world’ by one eminent ceramics expert, was accepted in Lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government in 2023 from the estate of Anthony du Boulay and allocated to the Ashmolean. Standing 63 cm high, it is truly a remarkable object, perhaps even more so because it was acquired — at a country house auction — by Mr du Boulay when still only a schoolboy in 1946. Du Boulay (1929–2022) went on to become a highly respected international authority on ceramics of many kinds and longstanding director of the Asian, Islamic and European ceramics departments at Christie’s.



The Western Art Department is also delighted to announce the acquisition of two paintings from the estate of the late Lady Eva Wills. A moving Italian rendering of the Adoration of the Shepherds and an atmospheric Dutch winter landscape have been allocated to the Ashmolean through the generosity of the Government Acceptance in Lieu Scheme, which enables taxpayers to transfer works of art into public ownership in lieu of inheritance tax.

Summoned by an angel to witness the recent birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem, the shepherds are shown craning their necks and contorting their bodies to get a view of the small, glowing baby as his mother, the Virgin Mary, pulls back a white sheet to reveal her son. This work, painted by the Renaissance Master Paolo Caliari (1528–1588), better known as Veronese after his native city of Verona, was painted mid-career in Venice. Veronese painted the subject described in the Gospel of Luke twice on a much larger scale for two Venetian churches while this smaller, more intimate work was likely painted for an unknown private patron

The second painting bequeathed from the estate of the Late Lady Wills is by the Dutch artist Aert van der Neer (1603–1677). He specialised in painting wintry and moonlight scenes and his *Winter Landscape with Skaters on a Frozen River* is a particularly stunning example, which is typical of his work in the mid-1640s



Paolo Caliari alias Veronese (1528–1588), *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, c.1563–65, oil on canvas, 95.3 x 115.6 cm. WA2024.116



Aert van der Neer (1603–1677), *Winter Landscape with Skaters on a Frozen River*, c.1645, oil on canvas, 69.9 x 99.1 cm. WA2024.117

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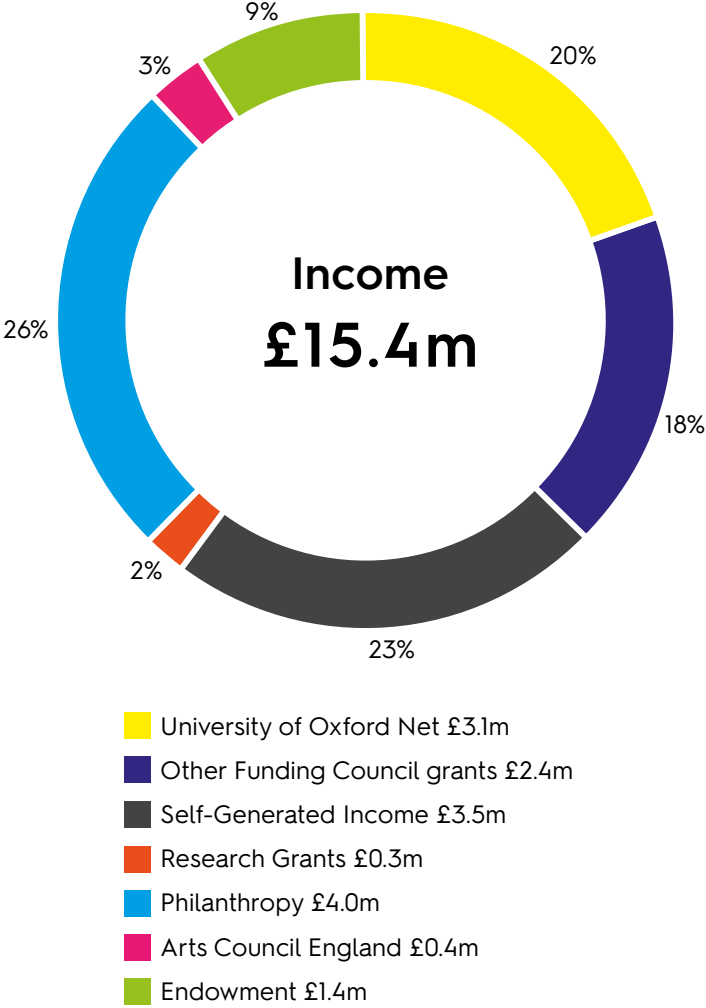
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FINANCIAL NARRATIVE

TOTAL INCOME

Total income received in the year was £15.4m, up £1.4m on the previous year. This is mostly due to an increase in philanthropic income driven by an increase in legacy income and donations secured to fund gallery and digitisation projects, coupled with an increase in the funding council grant, now secured for a further five years.

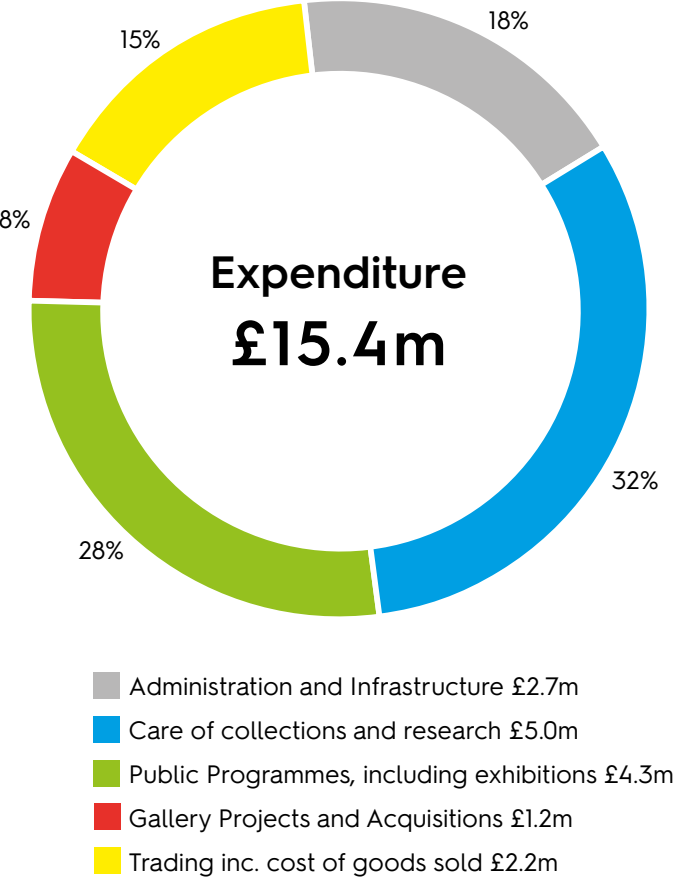
The increase in philanthropic income has helped to offset a reduction in self-generated income from the previous year, despite an increase in total visitors, as paying visitors numbers were lower than the previous year.

As the impacts of Covid-19, Brexit and the Russian/ Ukraine conflict continue to work through the economy, especially the public purse and visitor

economy, all sources of Museum funding remain under great pressure. Continuing to build our endowment, fundraising and public donations are 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 £15.4m. This was £1.4m more than the previous year. This is mostly due to an increase in funded spend on gallery and digitisation projects this year, coupled with the inflationary pressure on pay costs across all areas.





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