

ASHMOLEAN  
MUSEUM  
OXFORD

ANNUAL REVIEW

2023-24



ASHMOLEAN.ORG





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# FOREWORD



**Lord Lupton, CBE**  
Chair, Ashmolean Board of Visitors

**Dr Xa Sturgis, CBE**  
Director

University museums occupy a particular place within the wider museum landscape, balancing as they do their public role with their obligations towards their parent universities and the wider research community. Two noteworthy causes of celebration in the year covered by this review (August 2023–July 2024) reflect the Ashmolean’s success in striking this balance and the pitch at which we do so, while also suggesting how each side of this scale supports the other.

The last year has seen the robust return of visitors following the long pandemic hangover. Indeed, not only have visitors returned to pre-pandemic levels, but they are now outstripping them, with 933,690 visitors over the last year being our highest number on record meaning we are not only the most visited University Museum in the country, if not the world, but also the most visited museum in England, outside the capital. This is by no means a common story. The return of visitors to museums across the country presents a decidedly mixed picture and,

although our success has much to do with Oxford’s attraction as a tourist destination for both domestic and international tourists, it also reflects the strength of our public offer and our public programmes to which this report bears ample testimony.

The second, less visible but no less significant, cause for celebration within the Museum was the positive outcome for the Ashmolean of the review of university museum funding carried out by UKRI/Research England. The Higher Education Museums and Galleries fund is the only dedicated funding stream for University Museums and the Ashmolean is its largest single recipient. Given this fact, and our awareness that a number of worthy university museums were applying to the fund for the first time, we approached the review with degrees of trepidation. Our funding is predicated on the ways in which the Ashmolean supports the wider Higher Education sector and research community (as opposed to the teaching, research and research support we conduct for Oxford University) from the

work we do to make our collections and knowledge physically and digitally accessible for researchers to the ways in which we engage our publics with the fruits of that research. The case we could and did make was robust, and we were thrilled to see our grant increased by over 10% to £2.7 million a year, a resounding acknowledgement of the significance of our collections and the work we do to advance and promote learning and research across the country.

As this report makes clear, the year under review has seen activity and achievements on many fronts that also reflect our twin obligations towards the widest possible public and the research and student community within and beyond Oxford. Our major exhibition *Colour Revolution* brought the discoveries and insights of a major international research project on late-nineteenth-century attitudes towards colour to a wide museum-going audience; our new Collections On Line portal now provides access to a large and ever-growing proportion of our collection; the launch of our new series of contemporary exhibitions has seen the creation of striking and important new works in response to our collections and an Ashmolean exhibition (Pío Abad’s *To Those Sitting in Darkness*) being

nominated for the Turner Prize for the first time; our record visitor numbers have helped our self-generated income top £4 million for the first time. Behind the scenes we have been reviewing policies and practices around collection security in response to the distressing experience of the British Museum, while also conducting fruitful audience research to better understand the make up and needs of our many visitors.

As ever we have relied on the help of many friends and supporters in our endeavours and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who have helped us over the year. Of particular note has been the endowment of the curatorship of Chinese Art in honour of the Hong Kong gallerist Alice King by members of Alice King’s family and Vicky and Denys Firth, to whom we extend our particular thanks. The Museum’s Chinese Collections are among our most important – not least the remarkable collection of twentieth century and contemporary Chinese Ink Painting that has been developed over the last half century – and the endowment of the curator’s post will help ensure that this important collection continues to receive the attention and care that it deserves.



# A SEASON OF COLOUR

In Autumn 2023, the Ashmolean celebrated the opening of its major exhibition, *Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design*, which ran from 21 September 2023 to 18 February 2024.

As with all of the Ashmolean's major exhibitions, the themes of *Colour Revolution* informed a range of activities across the Museum, from international research projects and further displays to a reimagined seasonal public programme.

The next few pages detail how the theme of colour threaded its way through the Museum for the duration of this critically acclaimed exhibition.



## The Exhibition

*Colour Revolution* set high-profile loans alongside objects from the Ashmolean's permanent collection to rediscover and explore the vibrant colour palette of the Victorian era.

The exhibition considered the different attitudes and ideas about colour in the Victorian age, many of which were formed in reaction to a technologically-driven explosion of colour production. Including startling and beautiful objects, from vibrantly dyed dresses to coloured sculpture and paintings by artists from Turner to Whistler, *Colour Revolution* encouraged visitors to consider the different meanings that colour carried and implied for a Victorian audience.

*Colour Revolution* was co-curated by the Ashmolean's Matthew Winterbottom and Madeline Hewitson in collaboration with Charlotte Ribeyrol, Professor of Nineteenth-Century British Literature at Sorbonne University.



★★★★★

"Enthralling."

*The Observer*

★★★★★

"Brilliant and fascinating"

*The Guardian*

★★★★★

"A garrulous party-guest of a show."

*The Daily Telegraph*

### At a Glance:

124 objects on display

37 lenders

44,349 visitors

Half a million exhibition trailer views

Top image: Women's boots and a vivid purple day dress from about 1865-1870, featured in *Colour Revolution*.  
Left image: Edward Burne-Jones' *Angel With Lute* featured in *Colour Revolution*.

## Research Projects

The *Colour Revolution* exhibition was a major public output of the inter-institutional, multi-disciplinary research project CHROMOTOPE.

Funded by the European Research Council, CHROMOTOPE explored how the “chromatic turn” of the 1850s mapped out new ways of thinking about colour in literature, art, science, and technology throughout Europe. Some of these findings were shared at a two-day conference hosted by the Ashmolean in June 2023, which was organised around a public lecture by the exhibition’s co-curator, Charlotte Ribeyrol, as well as talks by academics and curators. More information about the research project can be found at <https://chromotope.eu/>.

The exhibition’s themes were further explored in another research project titled *Ruskin’s Painting Materials*. Led by the Museum’s Research Heritage Scientist Dr Tea Ghigo and funded by the Leverhulme Trust, this project used cutting-edge technologies to analyse and identify the pigments used by John Ruskin in his watercolours. In her work, Dr Ghigo paid particular attention to Ruskin’s *Study of a Kingfisher*.

*Ruskin’s Painting Materials* inspired a smaller display in the Museum titled *Pigments Revealed: Ruskin’s Quest for Durable Colour*, which opened in September 2023 in the Conservation Gallery. The display included a QR code that directed visitors to a video that explained the wider implications of Dr Ghigo’s material analysis of Ruskin’s watercolours and pigments.

## The 2023–24 Annual Appeal

The Ashmolean’s 2023–24 Annual Appeal took colour as its central theme, imagining the Museum as home to a riot of pigments and hues, from the bright reds of Uccello’s huntsmen to the glittering gold of the Alfred Jewel.

The Appeal invited our Patrons, Members, and other supporters to help us in our ongoing mission to bring the vibrant colours of the past to life through innovative exhibitions, bold public programming, and cutting-edge research and conservation work. We are delighted to report that, at its close, our “Make Lives More Vibrant” appeal raised over £35,000 from over 180 generous donors.

## Public Programme

*Colour Revolution* inspired the Museum’s seasonal public programme, which offered a range of exciting events, workshops, and talks around the theme “World in Colour.”

In total, the Museum hosted 28 exhibition-related events that were attended by 1,407 visitors. The two most popular were the natural dye workshop, an artist-led practical session that promoted natural alternatives to Victorian-invented synthetic dyes, and the Curator’s Talk, which took place both on-site and online. Some of the other offerings on the *World in Colour* programme included an Ethical Fashion talk, a medieval embroidery course, and an upcycling workshop led by the interior stylist and mural artist Richard O’Gorman.

The *World in Colour* programme also included a series of events that highlighted colourful objects within the Museum’s collections, including an artist talk with Rana Begum, whose *No. 592* was recently installed on the Chantrey Staircase, and a talk by our Research Keeper Dr Paul Roberts that explored the colours of Ancient Rome.

The *World in Colour* programme culminated in the One World Family Festival, a free weekend event in mid-February that brought together faiths and communities through a dazzling array of activities themed around colour.



A Japanese tea ceremony led by Clare Pollard, Curator of Japanese Art during the One World Family Festival.

The event was co-curated with twelve community partners and offered 26 activities celebrating the diversity of faiths and communities in and around Oxfordshire. From a Japanese tea ceremony to Nepalese dancing and Islamic calligraphy, there was something for everyone: other faiths and communities represented specifically in event descriptions included Chinese, Christian, Hindu, Indian, Jewish, Muslim, and Nigerian.

The festival was opened by the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire, the Vice-Chair of Oxfordshire County Council, and the Lord Mayor of Oxford. Over the course of the weekend, we welcomed nearly 10,000 visitors into the Museum, representing a 23% increase from the 2023 festival.

***‘The cross-referencing within galleries via the ‘lens’ of blue - more such tours please!***

***- Visitor feedback***



## EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS

*Colour Revolution* was the first of two major exhibitions in the period covered by this review. The second, *Bruegel to Rubens: Great Flemish Drawings*, brought together over 120 drawings by some of the greatest artists of the southern Netherlands, several of which were being shown in public for the very first time. The exhibition was a critical and commercial success, with reviewers praising it for its “rich,” “exuberant,” and “intimate” depictions of the Flemish Masters at work.

Elsewhere in the Museum, we launched *Ashmolean NOW*, a contemporary exhibition series that invites early to mid-career artists to create works in response to the Ashmolean and its collections. In the 2023–24 period, we welcomed three artists to exhibit in Gallery 8 as part of this programme: Pio Abad, whose Ashmolean show *To Those Sitting in Darkness* has since been nominated for the Turner Prize; and Flora Yukhnovich and Daniel Crews-Chubb, whose large, colourful paintings were on display from July 2023 into the New Year.

Contemporary artists were also conspicuous elsewhere in the Museum. In the Chinese Paintings Gallery, two shows celebrated significant living Chinese artists. The first brought together 100 paintings by Fang Lijun (b. 1963, Beijing), the second focused on the contemporary Chinese ink master Li Jin (b. 1958, Tianjin) and his friendship with the British caricaturist Roger Law. The Museum also presented two contemporary Japanese art exhibitions around the shared **theme of kabuki**. The first, *Kabuki Kimono*, displayed the spectacular kimono costumes of the kabuki actor Bandō Tamasaburō V. The second, *Kabuki Legends*, focused on the dynamic, colourful prints of Takahashi Hiromitsu (b. 1959, Kanagawa).

The Ashmolean was honoured and thrilled to be a partner celebrating 200 years since the National Gallery’s foundation when we hosted one of the Gallery’s greatest treasures, The Wilton Diptych, over the summer.

Image: Pio Abad’s Turner nominated *To Those Sitting In Darkness* exhibition.



**Bruegel to Rubens:  
Great Flemish Drawings**

From Bruegel's remarkable print designs and Rubens's first sketches to heartfelt friendship albums shared between artists, this major exhibition presented some of the most important drawings created during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the southern Netherlands. Other familiar names included Anthony van Dyck and Jacques Jordaens, amongst many others.

Rather than focusing on the artists or on the subjects shown, *Bruegel to Rubens* presented 128 drawings from the perspective of the function they performed in the artist's studio and beyond. The exhibition's organising idea was that drawings and sketches, often dashed off in a single sitting, offer a unique window into how art was made, shared, and sold during this time. Spread across three rooms, the exhibition encouraged visitors to 'look over the shoulders' of some of the world's greatest artists, offering in the process an intimate glimpse into their working methods and style.

This exhibition was the outcome of a collaboration between the Ashmolean Museum and Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp, as represented by its two co-curators, An Van Camp (Christopher Brown Curator of Northern European Art, Ashmolean Museum) and Virginie D'haene (Curator Old Master Prints and Drawings, Museum Plantin-Moretus).

★★★★★

"Every single work is a masterpiece"  
*The Guardian*

★★★★★

"This entertaining exhibition has energy to spare"  
*The Telegraph*

★★★★★

"Vital, intimate, exceptionally intense"  
*The Observer*

**At a Glance:**

128 objects on display

30,709 visitors

31 events linked to the exhibition

34 curator-led tours

Left Image: *Christ Mocked* by Anthony van Dyck, 1618-20, featured in *Bruegel to Rubens*. © Ashmolean Museum.

# ASHMOLEAN NOW: A NEW EXHIBITION SERIES

*Ashmolean NOW* is a new, free exhibition series that invites artists, curators, academics, and visitors to think critically about the Museum's collections and respond to them in different ways and with new perspectives. The series is curated by Dr Lena Fritsch, the Museum's Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art.



## **Flora Yukhnovich x Daniel Crews Chubb**

7 July 2023–14 January 2024

The inaugural *Ashmolean NOW* exhibition juxtaposed the work of two contemporary painters, Flora Yukhnovich and Daniel Crews-Chubb. Inspired by the Museum's collections, the artists developed a dynamic painterly language that spoke to the various ways in which the past lives on in the present.

Flora Yukhnovich (b. 1990) found herself drawn to the Museum's Dutch and Flemish still life paintings. Inspired by their thickened surfaces and rich palettes, Flora produced several large, abstract paintings in intense reds, pinks, peaches, and greens. These works playfully critiqued different notions of femininity in the history of art and popular culture by looking at the stereotypes of the "virtuous" and the "monstrous" woman.

Daniel Crews-Chubb (b. 1984) took inspiration from ancient sculptures of deities and non-human figures found in the Ashmolean to produce a group of monumental paintings of "immortals," as Crews-Chubb called them. These fantastical figures were created through a laborious process of addition and revision including drawing, impasto, and collage.



## **To Those Walking in Darkness Pio Abad**

10 February–8 September 2024

### **Shortlisted for the Turner Prize**

To prepare for this solo exhibition, London-based artist Pio Abad (b. 1983) delved into Oxford's vast collections to draw out objects whose complex histories had been marginalised, ignored, or forgotten. The result was a visual conversation encompassing drawing, sculpture, and text.

Pio's intricately detailed creations were displayed alongside select works by other artists and diasporic objects from Oxford collections and archives, including the Pitt Rivers Museum, St John's College, and Blenheim Palace. Together, they formed a devastating critique of the cultural loss that happens under colonialism. As Abad himself described it, the exhibition was an "act of illumination" that shed light on the "struggles and stories that have been kept in the dark for too long."

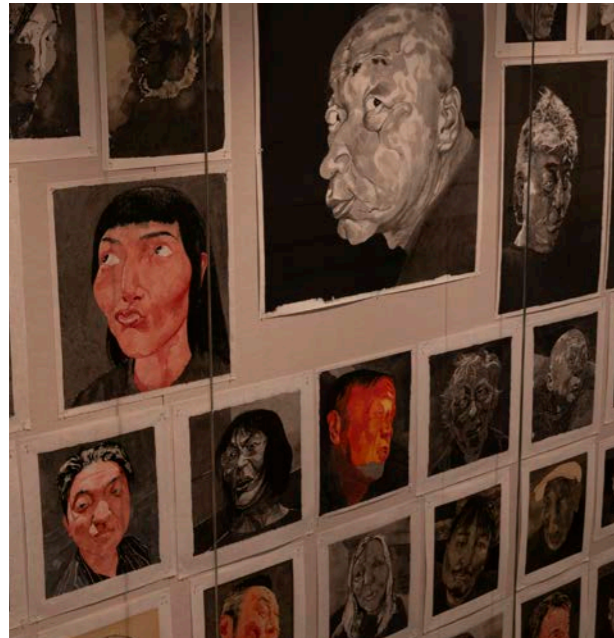


Left image: Pio Abad's Turner nominated *To Those Sitting In Darkness* exhibition.



# THE CHINESE PAINTINGS GALLERY

The Sullivan Gallery for Chinese paintings has exhibited modern Chinese art for more than 20 years, displaying works ranging from late imperial ink paintings to contemporary installation pieces. Over the years, it has been proud to host solo shows spotlighting some of the best-known artists working in the late twentieth-century, from Cai Guo-Qiang and Liu Dan to Qu Leilei.

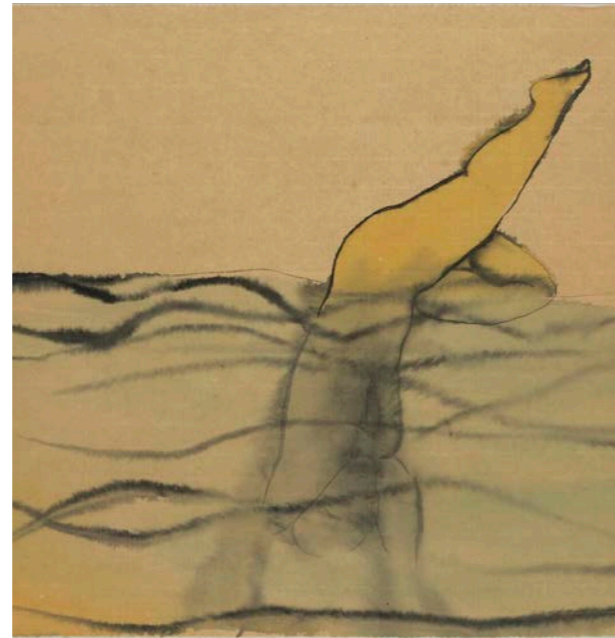


## **Portraits and Porcelains: The Art of Fang Lijun**

15 October 2023–14 April 2024

This retrospective celebrated more than one hundred artworks by the renowned Chinese artist Fang Lijun (b. 1963), on loan from his studios in Beijing and Jingdezhen and from private collections.

A leading figure in China's Cynical Realist movement, Lijun captured the alienation of his generation in portraits of figures with large, shaven heads and blank expressions. This exhibition displayed some of these iconic pieces alongside early pencil drawings from Fang's student days, as well as a wall of recent portraits painted in ink and a series of intriguing porcelain pieces created in the last decade.



## **Simple Pleasures: Li Jin with Roger Law**

4 May 2024–17 November 2024

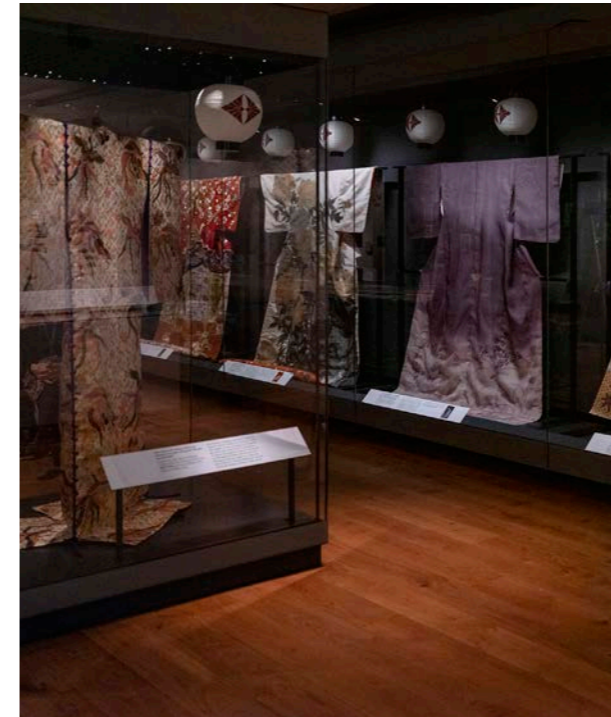
This exhibition set work by contemporary Chinese ink master Li Jin – his first solo show in the UK – alongside a selection of drawings and ceramic work by the British caricaturist Roger Law.

Active since the 1980s, Li Jin's witty depictions of the sensory pleasures of everyday life subvert the classical themes of elegance and serenity in Chinese literati painting. Li Jin met Roger Law in the late 1990s; the two formed a lasting friendship based in a shared artistic sensibility and sense of humour.

Top right: Li Jin (b. 1958), *Nude Bathing*, c.2021 © Li Jin Studio.

# EXHIBITIONS WITH A KABUKI THEME

In the 2023–24 period, our Curator of Japanese Art, Dr Clare Pollard, brought two, free contemporary Japanese art exhibitions to the Museum around the theme of kabuki, a form of dance-drama in which performers wearing elaborate costumes and make-up use stylised movement and song to enact melodramatic stories about love, loyalty, and the clash between duty and emotion.



## **Kabuki Kimono: The Costumes of Bandō Tamasaburō V**

21 November 2023–8 December 2024

Housed in the Museum's Textiles Gallery, *Kabuki Kimono* featured six spectacular kimonos belonging to the kabuki actor Bandō Tamasaburō V.

The costumes reflected the wide variety of roles in this revered actor's theatre career, from court ladies and courtesans to geisha and demons. These beautifully crafted costumes were also object studies in a range of elaborate textile techniques, including weaving, dyeing, embroidery and hand-painting.

Top right: Takahashi Hiromitsu (b. 1959), *Hongō*, 2003. Ashmolean Museum © Takahashi Hiromitsu.



## **Kabuki Legends: Stencil Prints by Takahashi Hiromitsu, Part 2**

16 February 2024–23 February 2025

*Kabuki Legends* brought together a selection of colourful prints by Takahashi Hiromitsu that visualise famous kabuki roles. This was the second show in a two-part exhibition of Hiromitsu's works at the Ashmolean.

These works recall Japan's traditional *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints but are made using a different technique – *kappazuri*, or stencil printing. This is a complex, labour-intensive process and Hiromitsu is one of very few artists working in this way today.

## ELSEWHERE IN THE MUSEUM

In 2023-24, the Museum's Money Gallery housed an exhibition that traced out the intriguing history of Europe's first common currency. On the floor above, the Ancient Middle East Gallery played host to two displays that offered contemporary views on the Museum's ancient collections.



Silver coin of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Lord of Denbigh, Governor-General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, 1564-1588, from Harderwijk, 1587 © Ashmolean Museum.

### **Money in Renaissance Germany**

12 January 2024-10 November 2024

In the mid-1550s, the Holy Roman Empire was rife with coins that seemed uniform but were in fact baser or lighter. To solve this issue, in 1559 the Empire adopted the first European common currency. This display told this remarkable story through a set of rare coins from the period.

### **Rana Ibrahim's *The Dying Marshes***

10 May 2023-8 November 2023

In this provocative collage, artist Rana Ibrahim combined ancient and contemporary imagery to explore the humanitarian, political, and environmental crises threatening the Mesopotamian marshes of southern Iraq, a UNESCO Heritage Site.

Set amongst some of the Ashmolean's oldest objects, this artwork asked us to think about how the death of this ecosystem would destroy our connection to and understanding of ancient Mesopotamian history.

### **Fashioning Bodies in the Ancient World**

10 November 2023-8 May 2024

In partnership with the Curating for Change Fellowship programme, this display explored how disability was celebrated and depicted in Ancient Egypt and the Ancient Middle East through six objects from the Ashmolean's collection.

The display incorporated the research of the Curating for Change Fellow at the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museum, Kyle Lewis Jordan, who is a disabled Egyptologist interested in the long history of disability in antiquity.

## THE WILTON DIPTYCH



In 2024, the National Gallery celebrated its 200th anniversary by loaning twelve of its most iconic paintings to cultural venues around the UK. As part of this programme, the Ashmolean was proud to display The Wilton Diptych to the public from 10 May 2024 to 1 September 2024. This marked the first time the painting had been lent by the National Gallery since it was acquired in 1929.

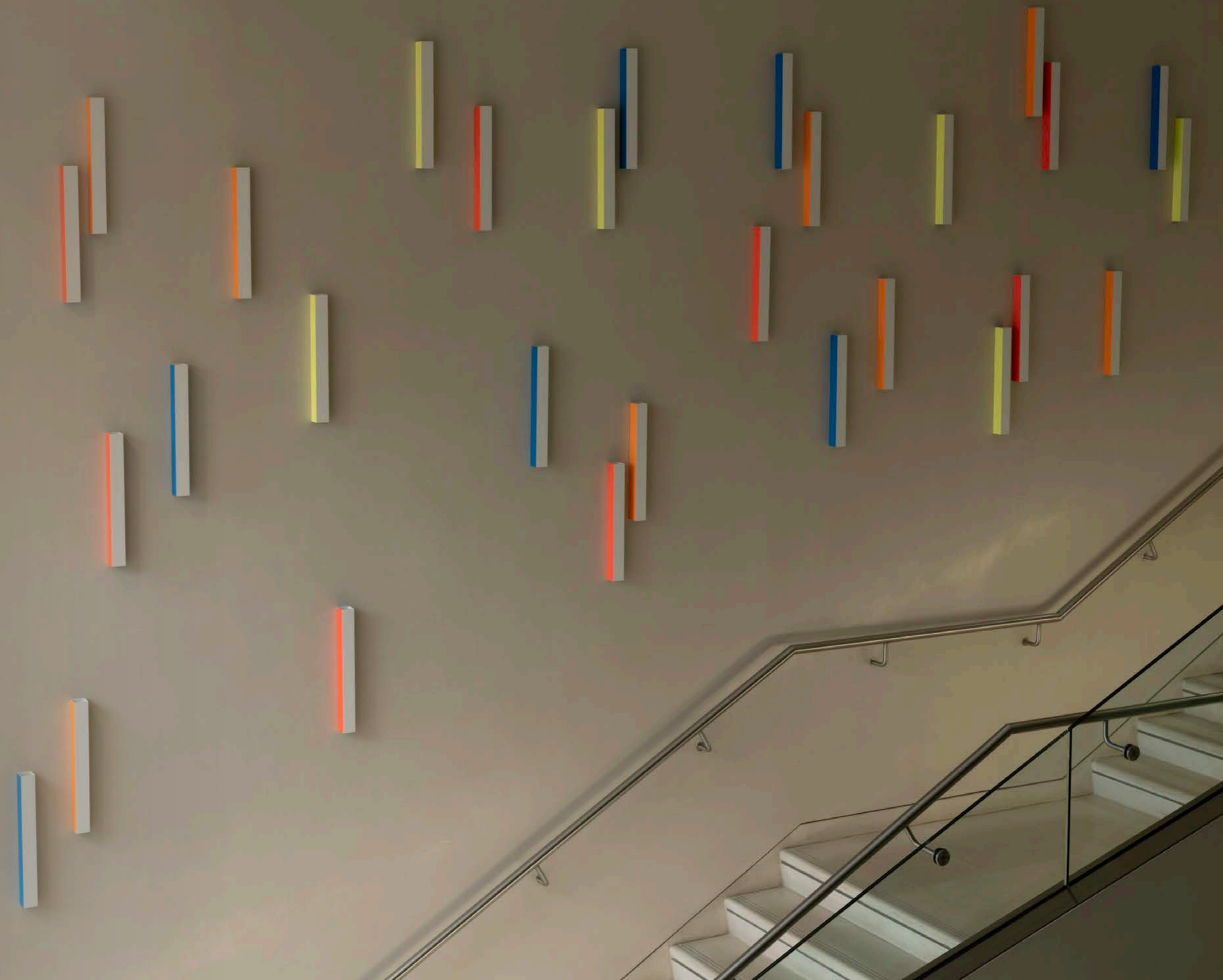
The exquisitely detailed painting is a remarkable and rare survivor. Painted in the late fourteenth century, it was made for the private devotions of King Richard II and is rich with personal symbolism. The Diptych was displayed in our medieval England gallery, allowing it to be seen alongside other devotional and royal objects including the Alfred Jewel, a similar icon of English kingship.

The display was accompanied by an audioguide exploring the Diptych's rich iconography and related works in the Ashmolean's collection. The Diptych was also a focus of the annual Family Festival of Art and Archaeology that was hosted by the Ashmolean in July 2024. More information about this event can be found on page 47.

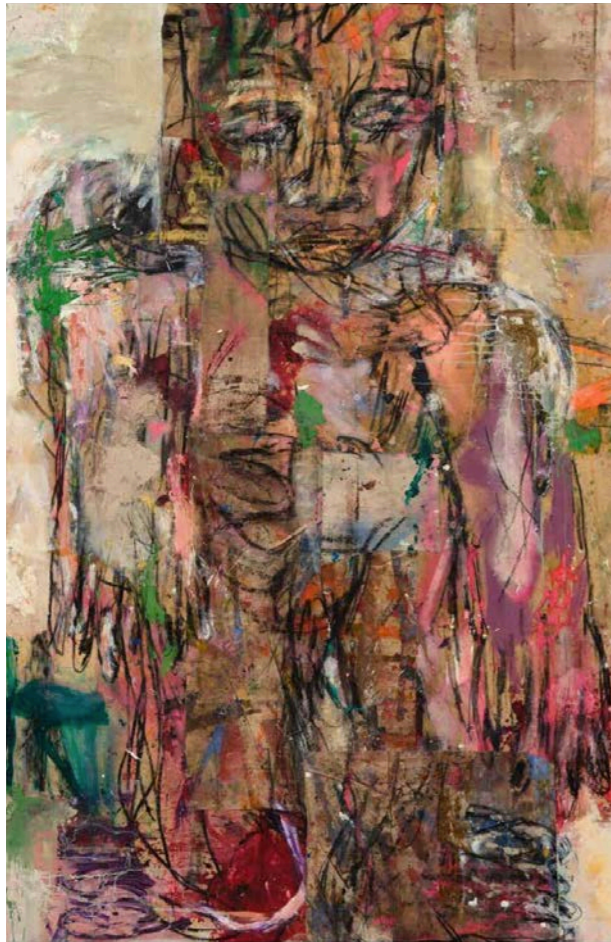
# ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

The Ashmolean's collection continues to grow and develop in ways that allow us to tell new stories in new ways. The year under review has seen a particular focus on contemporary acquisitions in both our Western and Eastern Art Departments.

Rana Begum's large-scale, minimalist *No. 592*, pictured here, was installed in 2023 after being gifted to the Museum by Prix Pictet Ltd in 2022. The artist has reconfigured the work to respond to the light washing in from the large picture window overlooking Pusey Lane and to correspond to the rhythm of the adjacent wall's installation of busts by Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841) of the eighteenth-century's rich and powerful.



# CONTEMPORARY ART ACQUISITIONS



**Daniel Crews-Chubb, *Immortal XVI* (2023)**

This large-scale artwork by Daniel Crews-Chubb (b. 1984) was displayed in the Museum as part of the artist's *Ashmolean NOW* show, is a self-reflexive meditation on the human compulsion to attain immortality through art. It has now entered the Museum's permanent collection as a gift from Matilda Liu.



**Anindita Bhattacharya, *Relics from the Land of the Wilted Rose* (2023)**

In 2024, the Museum welcomed a suite of thirty-two works by Anindita Bhattacharya (b. 1985) titled *Relics from the Land of the Wilted Rose* (2023).

Created with natural pigments and gouache on paper, the set in its entirety is a commentary on the violence and unravelling of a multicultural subcontinent.

Purchased with the assistance of the Eric North Bequest Fund.



**Raku Kichizaemon XV, *Yū (things that are blue and float in time-space)*, 2024**

Through the generosity of Mr Christopher M. Gorman-Evans, the Ashmolean has acquired a spectacular tea bowl by the Japanese ceramic artist Raku Kichizaemon XV (Jikinyū). This 2024 work from his 'White Rock' series is inspired by the music of contemporary Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu. The dynamically sculpted and glazed tea bowl is an excellent example of Jikinyū's highly creative and individualistic approach to the traditional tea bowl form passed down through generations of the Raku family.



**H G Arunkumar, *Cover* (2023)**

The sculpture *Cover* (2023) originated out of disturbing social conditions in an already struggling COVID-hit India. There were sporadic riots across the city of Delhi, one of which the artist, H G Arunkumar (b. 1968), witnessed. A mob attacked a lone man, who assumed the fetal posture to protect himself. Struck by the helplessness of the situation, the artist vented his anguish through art. Purchased with the support of the North Fund.

Above left: Daniel Crews-Chubb, *Immortal XVI*, 2023. Ashmolean Museum © Daniel Crews-Chubb.  
Above right: Anindita Bhattacharya, *Relics from the Land of the Wilted Rose*, 2023. Ashmolean Museum © Anindita Bhattacharya.

Above: Raku Kichizaemon XV, *Yū (things that are blue and float in time-space)*, 2024. Image courtesy of Annelly Juda Fine Art, London. Photographer: Yoko Taguchi. © Raku Kichizaemon XV. Below: H G Arunkumar, *Cover*, 2023 © H G Arunkumar.

**Broken Cogs in the Machine series (2022) – twelve paintings by Anupam Roy**

Born in 1985 in Bengal, India, Anupam Roy is a painter and designer of political posters, signage, and graffiti. This set of twelve works, titled *Broken Cogs in the Machine* (2022) explores the systemic injustices in India that impact the working class, whom the artist represents here as broken cogs of functionality. With bent, twisted, and broken limbs, the figures in Roy's paintings invite the viewer to consider what it means to break, resist, and remain broken within a violent sociopolitical system.

These paintings were a gift to the Museum from Tarana and Tarun Sawhney.



Top: Anupam Roy, *Broken Cogs in the Machine 0029*, 2022. Ashmolean Museum © Anupam Roy.  
Bottom: Anupam Roy, *Broken Cogs in the Machine 0037*, 2022. Ashmolean Museum © Anupam Roy.

**Three paintings by V Ramesh (2016)**

Painted as a tribute to, and an acknowledgement of, the Indian sage Ramana's sense of inclusivity, both in his life and teachings, these three works are part of a larger series of watercolour on paper.

In his many visits to Ramana's ashram, V Ramesh (b. 1958) noticed the ashram dogs lying quietly, almost in a meditative state. Hence, he painted them as devotees of Ramana. These works were a gift to the Museum from Tuntty Chauhan at Threshold Art Gallery, New Delhi.



**Forty-four Japanese prints and printed books (twentieth to twenty-first century)**

We are grateful to Philip Harris for his gift of a group of 44 contemporary Japanese woodblock prints and printed books by Morimura Ray, Tsuruya Kōkei, and Mori Yoshitoshi.

These supplement previous donations by Mr Harris and make a significant addition to our contemporary Japanese print holdings. Our collection of prints by Morimura Ray is now the strongest collection outside Japan.



Top: V Ramesh, *Devotee*, 2016. Ashmolean Museum © V Ramesh.  
Bottom: Morimura Ray, *Kinkakuji in Snow*, 2012. Ashmolean Museum © Morimura Ray.

# WESTERN ART ACQUISITIONS



## Pieter Bruegel I, *The Temptation of St Anthony* (c.1556)

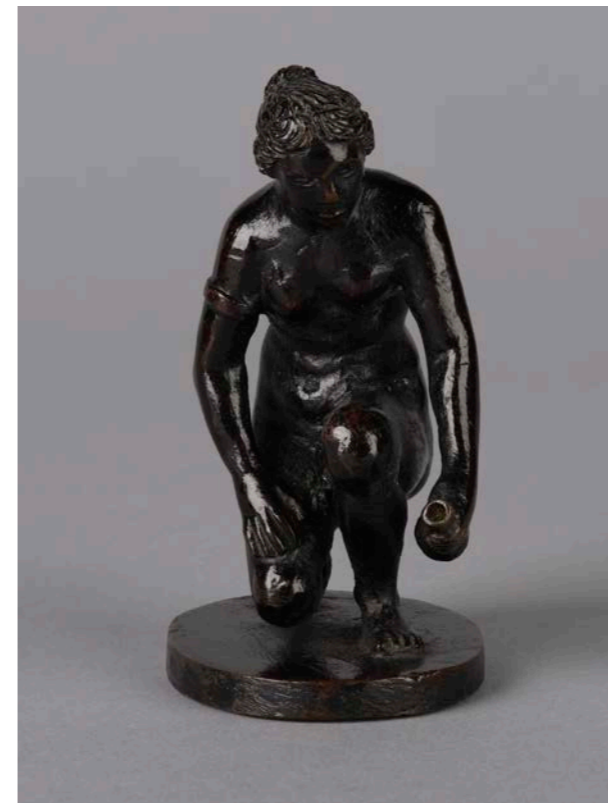
The Ashmolean has long been home to Bruegel's elaborate and fantastical drawing of the Temptation of St Anthony that was one of the centrepieces of our major exhibition *Bruegel to Rubens*. Surprisingly, however, until now the Museum has not held a copy of the print made from the drawing. Now, thanks to the generous support of Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, we do.

We are proud to be able to bring these two artworks together at the Ashmolean: to study them side by side, show them to our visitors, and use them in our teaching and research activities.

Dated in 1556, the engraving is one of the earliest examples designed by the Flemish Master Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525–69), who is best known for his impressive landscapes and scenes with peasants. Bruegel collaborated with the specialist engraver Pieter van der Heyden (c.1530–1576) to turn his fantastical design into a print.

Only twenty impressions of this incredibly rare print are known worldwide. This is moreover a superb, early impression of the first state, before an extra coin spilling from the money pouch was added in the lower right corner.

Top: Pieter Bruegel I, *The Temptation of St Anthony*, c.1556 © Ashmolean Museum.



Francesco Fanelli, *A Crouching Woman*, c.1620–40  
© Ashmolean Museum.

## Attributed to Francesco Fanelli, *A Crouching Woman*, c.1620–40

Upon arriving at the Ashmolean, this tiny bronze joined another of the same size cast from the same wax model, but with striking differences. In the other, the figure is crouching on a clam shell, identifying her as Venus, and based eventually on a famous antique bronze by the Greek sculptor, Doidalses. Here, Venus's attribute has been removed, and she holds a flask in her left hand. The pair are of great scholarly interest.

Presented by Tomasso Fine Art in honour of Jeremy Warren.



Workshop of Antoine Conrade, Tin-glazed earthenware with decoration in the manner of Italian maiolica, c.1640–48 © Ashmolean Museum.

## Twenty-four pieces of French faience, c.1640–8

An outstanding addition to the European ceramic collections was a group of twenty-four pieces of French faience from the near-incomparable collection formed by Sidney R. Knafel (1930–2021), a New York City financier and philanthropist who was, in his lifetime, a supporter of the Ashmolean's ceramic collections.

According to the terms of Mr Knafel's will, and through the good will of his widow Londa Weisman, the Ashmolean was permitted to make a selection from the collection, which has transformed the Museum's previously uneven group of French tin-glazed pottery.



**Vauxhall Porcelain vase, c.1755**

We are extremely grateful to the government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme for its allocation of works of art and heritage objects to the Ashmolean. This year, we accepted a monumental Vauxhall porcelain vase via the scheme from the estate of the late Anthony du Boulay.

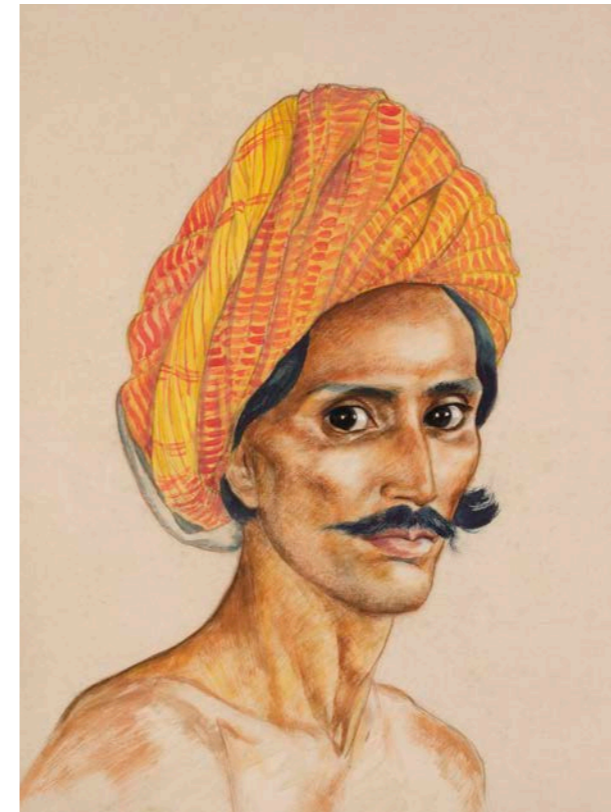
The Vauxhall vase and cover is thought to have been produced at the Vauxhall Porcelain Manufactory in South London, which closed in 1763. As such, it is the largest and most important of all surviving examples of Vauxhall porcelain. Measuring 65.3 x 35 x 33.5cm, the vase's sheer size makes it a tour-de-force of potting. It is currently on display in the Museum's European Ceramics Gallery.



**Two drawings by Thomas Carwitham, c.1713-1717**

Carwitham studied with Sir James Thornhill and worked as a decorative painter at Hampton Court and elsewhere. Among his drawings, the Ovid illustrations form a distinctive group. In the above drawing, Arachne, a talented tapestry weaver, falls foul of Athena, who turns her into a spider. Presented by Dr Richard Stephens in memory of Michael and Pamela Page.

Top: Vase and cover, attributed to the Vauxhall Porcelain Manufactory (1752-63), c.1755 © Ashmolean Museum.  
Bottom: Thomas Carwitham, *Athena and Arachne*, c.1713-18 © Ashmolean Museum.

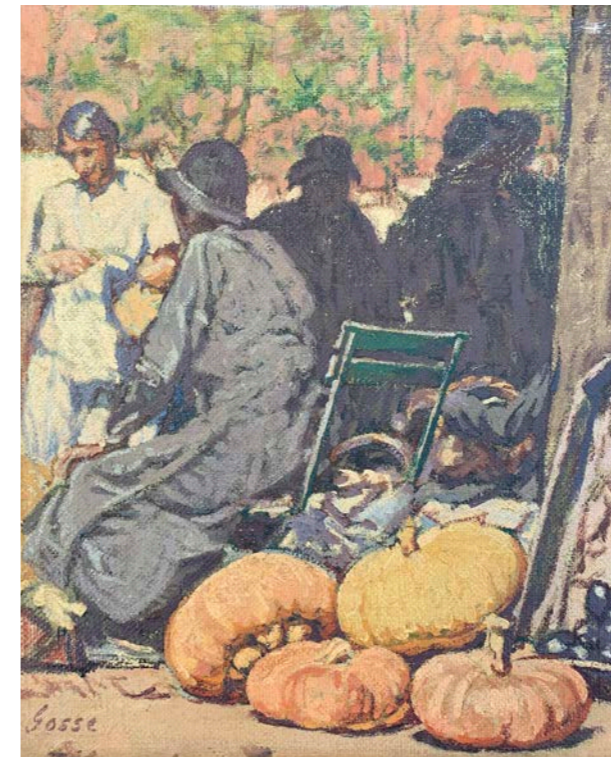


**Magda Nachman, *Portrait of a Man* (1936)**

This compelling portrait by Magda Nachman (1889-1951) conveys the high quality and beauty of Nachman's art and is thought to be the earliest known drawing from her time in India.

New conversations will open up between this portrait and the cross-cultural themes that animate the Museum as a whole. Indeed, Nachman's career embodies crossing and connecting cultures, as well as reflecting some of the major events of the twentieth century.

The painting was purchased with the support of the Art Fund in memory of Dr Jon Whiteley (1945-2020), a much-loved curator in the Western Art Department.



**Sylvia Gosse, *Market Scene, France* (c.1940-45)**

In spite of her diffident character, Sylvia Gosse (1881-1968) enjoyed a successful career as both painter and etcher. She was the most talented of Walter Sickert's female associates and her subjects were similar to his: interiors, music halls, and townscapes.

Gosse spent much of her time in France and exhibited a number of French scenes during the war. At the Ashmolean, this painting will join several etchings by the artist. Presented by Gillian James in memory of her mother, Helen Just, F.R.C.M.

Top: Magda Nachman, *Portrait of a Man*, 1936 © Ashmolean Museum  
Bottom: Sylvia Gosse, *Market Scene, France*, c.1940-5. Ashmolean Museum  
© Estate of Laura Sylvia Gosse. All Rights Reserved 2024.

## EASTERN ART ACQUISITIONS



### Forty-seven Japanese artworks (eighteenth to nineteenth century)

Dr Ellis Tinios has generously presented a group of 47 eighteenth to nineteenth century Japanese hanging scrolls, fan paintings and album leaves. Mostly by artists from Kyoto and Osaka working in the naturalistic Maruyama-Shijō style or in Chinese style, the works complement our existing Japanese painting collections.

Including studio practice paintings, copies of printed models and works by amateur painters, the works give a fascinating insight into contemporary Japanese painting practice.



### Three works by Lancelot Ribeiro (1962)

Our Indian art collections have further grown this year with the addition of three striking landscapes by the late Indian Expressionist Lancelot Ribeiro (1933–2010), generously donated by his daughter Marsha Ribeiro.

In these paintings, Ribeiro uses strong black lines and arresting blocks of colour to capture his various homes; first Goa and Bombay, and later London.

Top: Kishi Renzan, *A fox-spirit disguised as a monk pausing to look at a rat in a fox trap*, mid-nineteenth century © Ashmolean Museum. Bottom: Lancelot Ribeiro, *Untitled (Townscape)*, 1962 Ashmolean Museum, © Lancelot Ribeiro Estate.

## HEBERDEN COIN ROOM ACQUISITIONS

### Maurice Bull collection

This year, we have also been delighted to be able to purchase the Maurice Bull collection for our Heberden Coin Room. Maurice Bull spent his lifetime collecting, studying, and recording the half-crown denomination struck at the Oxford Mint from 1642–46.

Thanks to a generous donation from Mr Mark Haworth, Bull's 164 dies will now join 45 others in our Coin Room. As a result, the Ashmolean will steward 90% of all the known dies of this type. We look forward to sharing this extraordinary resource with scholars and enthusiasts for further research.



A silver Oxford half-crown depicting King Charles I (1625–49), 1643 © Ashmolean Museum.

### Two Roman Silver Denarii

Our Ancient Rome coin collections have benefited this year from the addition of two Roman silver denarii, thanks to a generous donation from the Richard Beleson and Kim Lam Beleson Fund.

The first of these, which dates to CE 283–296, is pictured right. The second dates to CE 286–293 and depicts on its reverse an image of clasped hands (HCR135867).



A Roman imperial coin depicting a bust of Carausius (obverse) and a she-wolf feeding twins (reverse), CE 283–296 © Ashmolean Museum.

### Stratford Halfpenny

This rare memorial halfpenny token, gifted to the Museum by J. Eric Engstrom, nicely complements the larger Engstrom Shakespeare Medal Collection of 437 specimens given in 2019.

The object borrows its portrait from the Chandos portrait (now in the National Portrait Gallery, London); the reverse inscription confirms the intention, 'to perpetuate the memory of Shakespeare'. Fittingly, the token was distributed in Stratford, Warwickshire, William Shakespeare's spiritual and literal home.



Stratford memorial halfpenny depicting a bust of Shakespeare (obverse) and a dedication to his life (reverse), c.1701–1800 © Ashmolean Museum.

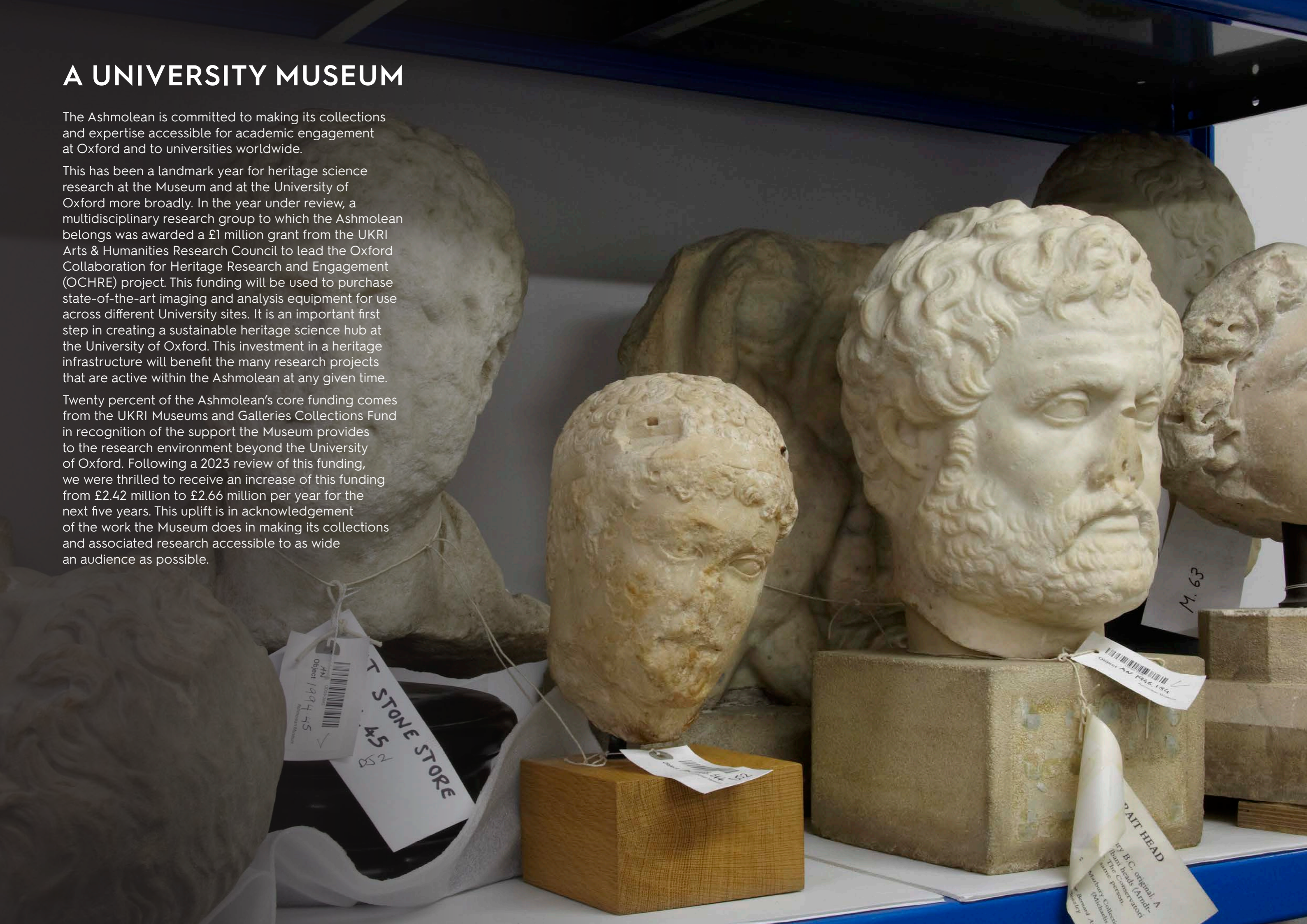


# A UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

The Ashmolean is committed to making its collections and expertise accessible for academic engagement at Oxford and to universities worldwide.

This has been a landmark year for heritage science research at the Museum and at the University of Oxford more broadly. In the year under review, a multidisciplinary research group to which the Ashmolean belongs was awarded a £1 million grant from the UKRI Arts & Humanities Research Council to lead the Oxford Collaboration for Heritage Research and Engagement (OCHRE) project. This funding will be used to purchase state-of-the-art imaging and analysis equipment for use across different University sites. It is an important first step in creating a sustainable heritage science hub at the University of Oxford. This investment in a heritage infrastructure will benefit the many research projects that are active within the Ashmolean at any given time.

Twenty percent of the Ashmolean's core funding comes from the UKRI Museums and Galleries Collections Fund in recognition of the support the Museum provides to the research environment beyond the University of Oxford. Following a 2023 review of this funding, we were thrilled to receive an increase of this funding from £2.42 million to £2.66 million per year for the next five years. This uplift is in acknowledgement of the work the Museum does in making its collections and associated research accessible to as wide an audience as possible.



# EXHIBITIONS AND RESEARCH

Our exhibition programme is designed to provoke and promote scholarly activity in the Museum and beyond. More information about CHROMOTOPE, the international research project that underpinned our Colour Revolution exhibition, can be found on page 6, along with details about a second research project focused on John Ruskin's colour palette.

## Enriching Exhibition Stories

Our major exhibition *Labyrinth: Knossos, Myth & Reality* has sparked a number of exciting research projects since closing to the public in July 2023. Most recently, content from the exhibition has been used as part of the AHRC-funded research project *Enriching Exhibition Stories*, which aims to engage new audiences with the Museum's collection. As part of these efforts, a group of schoolchildren from Cheney School in Oxford used tools developed by the project to create their own catalogue of Ashmolean objects.

## Global Gender and the Goddess

The Ashmolean has been involved in a further AHRC-funded project that is similarly public-facing and has a thematic link to our forthcoming major exhibition about Aphrodite.

Inspired by the research of Anna-Maria Misra, Professor of Global History at the University of Oxford, *Global Gender and the Goddess* explores changing ideas about gender in a global context. As a partner in this project, the Ashmolean's work with Professor Misra has included the creation of a display and audio guide that explore gender through the lens of the Ashmolean's collections.



A core output of the project is a young people's programme called Museum Makers that involved a group of 16–24-year-old curators not currently in education or employment. These curators worked with staff and other collaborators to develop pop-up tours and contribute to the Museum's Smartify audio guides.

They also collaborated with Photo Oxford to develop a showcase of photography and collage inspired by the Museum's collections *In Their Image*. This exhibition is on display outside the Museum's learning studio until 19 January 2025.

Top: The *In Their Image* showcase, created by the Museum Makers collective as part of the *Global Gender and the Goddess* research project © Ashmolean Museum.  
Right: The Oxford Crown, 1644. Charles I on horseback above a view of the city of Oxford © Ashmolean Museum.

# RESEARCH IN THE HEBERDEN COIN ROOM

In the last twelve months, the Heberden Coin Room has been abuzz with research activity, with four funded projects running parallel to one another.

## Artificial Intelligence & Roman Provincial Coinage

This year, thanks to a grant from the John Fell Fund, a dedicated research team in the Coin Room has developed a set of AI processes to translate and encode the inscriptions on Roman coinage. This has precipitated a step change in how this kind of work is performed; in just five months, 150,000 inscriptions have been successfully translated.

## Portable Lasers & Gold Coinage

The John Fell Fund is supporting a second project that is similarly innovative and tech-driven. Dr George Green, Senior Research Fellow for Classical and Scientific Archaeology at the University of Oxford, is collaborating with the Engineering Department to build a portable laser sampling device for the Ashmolean's gold coin collection. When complete, this tool will enable the Ashmolean – and other museums – to safely perform laser sampling of high-value objects on-site. These samples, rather than the objects themselves, can then be taken for analysis, eliminating many of the practical barriers of external laboratory-based work.

## Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire

This celebrated project, generously funded by the Augustus Foundation, continues. In the past year, it has added an impressive array of visualisation tools to its project website and has added several coin hoards to its online records. Currently, its database holds 6,953,445 coins representing 18,165 hoards.

## Hidden Kingdoms: South-West Britain in Late Antiquity

Objects from the Ashmolean's collections held by the Coin Room and Antiquities form part of the Museum's participation in *Hidden Kingdoms: the South-West of Britain in Late Antiquity*, a three-year research project that is funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

Working with colleagues at the Universities of Exeter and Cardiff, this project aims to bring a new understanding of power and economy in the South-West region from the fifth to the seventh century. These findings will, in turn, inform on the interpretation of relevant material in the Ashmolean's own collections.



# RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE MUSEUM'S WESTERN ART PRINT ROOM AND STUDY ROOMS

## Funded Research Projects in the Western Art Print Room

In the Western Art Print Room, great strides have been made in several ongoing research projects. We are pleased to report that our *British Drawings* project, supported by the Elizabeth Cayzer Charitable Trust, is making fantastic progress, with catalogue entries and research descriptions of over 500 of the archive's drawings now complete.

Meanwhile, in our ongoing *Raphael Drawings* project, archival and documentary research has thrown new light on the institutional history of Ashmolean's collection and led to the reconstruction of unexecuted projects by the artist. The project has also uncovered fascinating new details about Raphael's artistic process, for example, the use of raking light photography has revealed a lost drawing for the Disputation of the Holy Sacrament, thus recording a step in the artist's creative process that had previously gone unnoticed.

Finally, the Museum's four-year *Italian Drawings* project, funded by the Getty Foundation, is coming to close and we expect to be able to offer a full overview of its successes in next year's report.

## The Western Art Print Room and our other Study Rooms

As one of the Museum's dedicated study room open to the public, the Western Art Print Room is a critical resource not just for University of Oxford researchers but for art-lovers of all kinds.

In the period under review in this report, it welcomed almost 2,000 visitors, including 348 students and 290 researchers from international universities and UK institutions, with over 14,600 drawings, prints and other objects retrieved for enjoyment, teaching, and research. A total of 100 talks and tours were held in the space, 68 of which were for special interest groups and societies, school students, or the general public.

*"Thank you so much for an unforgettable afternoon looking at drawings last week. You had chosen such a beautiful selection, and seeing them without the usual glass barrier was a real privilege. What a good home they have found at the Ashmolean!"*

- A visitor to the Western Art Print Room

The Museum's other study rooms enjoyed a similarly high level of engagement with researchers, school groups, and the public. In the past year, 650 people have visited the Antiquities Study Room has from all over the world, including from Yale University, Kokushikan University, and the University of Paris Sorbonne.

Over 2,800 objects from our Eastern Art Study Room have been used for teaching and research purposes, with an extra 1,318 being used for public engagement. Meanwhile, our Heberden Coin Room Study Room has welcomed over fifty taught classes since 1 August 2023.



## The Terra Collection-in-Residence Project

In 2022, the Ashmolean was selected by the Terra Foundation for American Art to participate in its Collection-in-Residence programme. As part of this exciting scheme, the Museum received several loan prints as well as funding to build teaching and learning opportunities around these works.

This past year, the Ashmolean developed ways for the prints to be used by a wide array of researchers, students, and schoolchildren. The prints have brought undergraduates and postgraduates to the Western Art Print Room by featuring in classes in a wide range of disciplines and departments including English, History, History of Art, Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies, American Studies, Japanese Studies, and Refugee Studies.

They have also served as a key resource for scholars participating in the Museum's Krasis Programme, an interdisciplinary teaching and learning programme that invites Oxford Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to work as Ashmolean Junior Teaching Fellows alongside

a cohort of Oxford undergraduates and postgraduates.

Finally, the Collection-in-Residence programme has supported the creation of a microinternship scheme, which launched in summer 2023. Undergraduates are invited to spend a day at the Ashmolean exploring the collection under the supervision of Dr Jim Harris, the Museum's Teaching Curator. They then work independently to produce a piece of work on their chosen print that connects to some part of the UK A-level curriculum.

The scheme provides a bridge between undergraduate and secondary school learning in ways that are beneficial to both parties. In the 2023-24 period, the Museum was able to welcome sixteen micro-interns to the programme.



£1,101,837

is the total value of the twelve research projects running during 2023-24 in which the Ashmolean is involved.

£309,377

is the total value of the five new research projects funded in 2023-24 in which the Ashmolean is involved.

5,024

people visited our Western Art Print Room and other Study Rooms



30,384

objects were used for research and teaching in our Western Art Print Room and other Study Rooms.

24 Masters and Doctoral

students were supervised by Ashmolean curators.

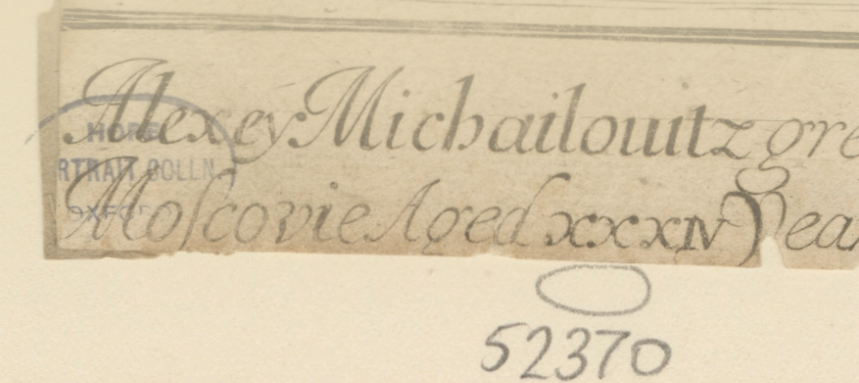
## DIGITISING OUR COLLECTIONS

Digitisation is a key part of our work at the Ashmolean. In the past year, we have invested heavily in our digital infrastructure to ensure that our collections can be accessed by users around the world for the purposes of research, teaching, and learning.

In December 2023 we successfully relaunched our online collection search tool on a new platform that enjoys faster speeds and higher functionality than its predecessor. For those interested in visual information, there is a specialist viewing tool that allows users to deep zoom where there are high-quality photographs of the collections. The platform also provides new ways to search, explore and discover our collections using filters, links to similar records, and an archive view.

In the seven months since its launch (Dec 2023-Jul 2024), this new tool has been accessed by 62,000 visitors, resulting in 690,000 page views. This represents a significant increase compared to our previous online collections site, which was used in the previous twelve-month period by 69,000 visitors with just under 650,000 pages viewed overall.

As well as improved functionality, our new online collections platform boasts a huge number of new records. Thanks to the diligent work of several teams across the Museum, we exceeded our digitisation target for the 2023-24 year, with over 300,000 collection records now accessible online.



Top: Glyn Philpot, *Design for Philip II's Costume in Émile Verhaeren's 'Philip II'*, 1918 © Ashmolean Museum. This drawing is part of the Museum's *British Drawings* research project.

# A SPOTLIGHT ON OUR DIGITISATION WORK

In 2023–24, the mammoth task of making digital surrogates for every object in our collection has continued across all departments. External funding has allowed us to make great strides in digitising our Hope Portrait Prints collection and our medieval Greek coin collection, and a grant from the Headley Trust has enabled further digitisation of the Sir Arthur Evans archive, with a special focus this year on the archive’s photographs, drawings, and paintings. Here are some highlights from our digitisation efforts:



## Hope Collection of Portrait Prints (Western Art)

This collection, amassed by British naturalist Reverend Frederick William Hope (1797–1862) and his wife Ellen, comprises approximately 200,000 portraits of British and European sitters as well as master prints, topographical views, translation engraving, and newspaper cuttings.

The cataloguing and digitisation of this archive, generously funded by Jacqueline and Richard Worswick along with a circle of supporters, has been underway since 2019. In the last year, 9,682 new data images have been brought online, with an additional 5,000 records currently being processed. This work has involved the physical numbering of portraits of European lawyers, military, literary figures, artists, and musicians. In so doing, the team discovered prints by Dürer, van Dyck, and Rembrandt.

## Coin and medals collection (Coin Room)

This project aims to digitise the Museum’s entire collection of coins, paper money, tokens, jetons, and medals to provide wider access to the collection for research and engagement.

In the last year, 16,430 data records have been created, 125,000 records improved, and 28,614 images uploaded.



Top left: John Faber the Younger (1684–1756), *Portrait of Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia*, 1742 © Ashmolean Museum. Top right: A gold quadrupla of Urban VIII, 1634 © Ashmolean Museum.



Cretan worker next to pithos at Knossos © Ashmolean Museum.

## Sir Arthur Evans Archive (Antiquities)

This archive 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.

Having catalogued Evans’ notebooks for the museum’s *Labyrinth* exhibition (2023), this year the team has continued to digitise the archive’s architectural drawings and photographic archive. In the last year, over 3,000 new records have been created, alongside the scanning of images. The work this year has been supported by the Headley Trust.



A photographic portrait of May Hamilton Beattie from the related archive © Ashmolean Museum.

## May Hamilton Beattie archive (Eastern Art)

This comprehensive archive comprises an estimated 15,000 slides, 14,000 negatives, 1,000 books and pamphlets, 120 carpets and weavings, and 45,000 paper records documenting the life-long research career of this pioneering carpet scholar.

In the last year, our team have worked to create 8,602 new records. They have brought online approximately 10,500 folios and 12,000 images.

# LEARNING IN THE MUSEUM

The Ashmolean Museum is committed to providing educational opportunities for learners of all ages. This year, the Museum's dedicated Schools & University Engagement team has focused on developing its schools learning programme, which is created in collaboration with teachers to meet the needs of primary and secondary school curricula.

These formal learning opportunities operate alongside and in dialogue with the Museum's public programme, which is designed by our Informal Learning and Public Programmes team to be as inclusive and accessible as possible. This year, the Museum debuted a new seasonal calendar of public events that are organised around a theme inspired by the current major exhibition. This special seasonal calendar of events sits alongside our ongoing programmes that prioritise adults over 60 who don't regularly visit, young people, and families. Some such offerings, more information about which can be found overleaf, include the Meet Me social group for over-60s, our *Museum Makers* programme for young people not currently in employment, and our popular *Baby Bundle* programme, which offer activities for new parents and carers with babies under one.



Children using the *Ashmolean Adventure*, an interactive digital guide designed for families.

# FORMAL LEARNING OFFERINGS

This year, the Ashmolean has worked in partnership with two local institutions – Christ Church Cathedral and Greyfriars Catholic School – to create new programmes for primary and secondary schools that develop participants’ critical thinking and visual literacy skills, as well as a sense of ownership of the Ashmolean and the University of Oxford.

## To Be a Pilgrim

An important initiative this year has been the development of a new primary school learning session around the theme of pilgrimage in partnership with Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

In the Museum, children engage in gallery-based learning activities that allow them to practice the close study of objects on display. They then engage with handling boxes that include replica pilgrim badges, medieval pottery, and leather pilgrim shoes. The session ends with an immersive soundscape that evokes the experience of a pilgrimage journey. The group then leave on a pilgrim’s route through Oxford to another interactive session at Christ Church Cathedral.

As with all our workshops, special efforts have been made to ensure that the “To Be A Pilgrim” session is inclusive for children with special educational needs and/or a disability in a mainstream school. For example, we developed a visual story as an alternative to the immersive soundscape to accommodate children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## Other Offerings

In 2023–24, the Museum has developed several new resources for primary school groups. These include three art boxes that act as guides for understanding portraiture, landscapes, and abstract art; as well as two activity boxes about Ancient Rome.

In particular, the team has focused on improving the Museum’s offer and resources for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In the past year, we have developed a set of three new sensory bags that are intended for use by neurodivergent children, however, they are useful for any child who might find the Museum overstimulating and overwhelming.

The bags contain sketching materials, fidget toys, a magnifier, some blank postcards, and an Etch A Sketch drawing toy. An example of one of these is pictured at the bottom right of the facing page.



## Inspiring Growing Minds

In 2022, the Ashmolean launched its *Inspiring Growing Minds* pilot project in partnership with Greyfriars Catholic School, a secondary school located in one of Oxford’s most socio-economically vulnerable areas.

This ambitious project aims to deliver benefits for students, teachers, and Museum staff through collaborative engagement with the Ashmolean and its collections. The project is generously supported by an anonymous donor and friend to the Ashmolean.

In the past year, the team has made exceptional progress in co-creating educational offerings that can be used not only by the Greyfriars students but by other secondary schools, too. These include a new Colour Handling box, which enables students and teachers to explore the history of colour and pigment through sensory exploration and learning, as well as a new school session that explores representations of women artists and women in art across the Museum’s collections.



### At a Glance:

**15,159 pupils** participated in **548 sessions** taught by Museum staff

**18,182 pupils** participated in **700 self-guided group sessions** at the Museum

**856 pupils** participated in **18 online sessions** taught by Museum staff

**123 teachers** received teacher training at the Museum

# OUR PUBLIC PROGRAMME



## “Making a Mark” Seasonal Programme

Following the success of the “World in Colour” seasonal programme, more information about which can be found on page 7, in March 2023 the Museum launched its “Making a Mark” public programme to coincide with the opening of *Bruegel to Rubens*.

The programme explored the various creative techniques used by artists to literally “make a mark” whilst also considering the many ways in which artworks make a mark on us and change how we see the world.

The programme hosted 31 events that were attended by 880 visitors. Popular offerings included the Friendship Journal workshop, in which artist Hanan Zein Eddin guided

attendees in creating a sketchbook journal; a talk by bestselling author and art critic Laura Cumming about her book *Thunderclap* and its links with the Dutch and Flemish artworks in the Ashmolean’s collection; and An Van Camp’s Curator’s Talk, which was attended by over 230 people.

Other offerings included a portraiture workshop, a pastels workshop, and an author talk by Michael Pye, whose *Antwerp: The Glory Years* explores the fascinating history of the town where Bruegel and Rubens worked. Pictured above is an Ainu wood-carving workshop led by members of Nibutani Craft Cooperative Association, Hokkaido. In these workshops, participants gained an understanding of the craft process involved in the creation of traditional carved wooden trays.

## Older People Programmes

In the period under review, we delivered 37 events that were designed specifically for over 60s who do not regularly visit museums. These events, which included gallery tours and artist-led drawing sessions, presented the Museum as a calm space where older visitors could get to know the collections in their own time. We also continued our work in welcoming group visits and outreach sessions for organisations that represent older people, including Age Concern, Asylum Welcome, Fairfield Care Home, and Wolvercote Older People’s Group.

Working with our colleagues across Oxford University, we continued to support the *Meet Me* programme, a social group for older people that offers free, behind-the-scenes access to the University’s various Gardens, Libraries, and Museums sites. We arranged *Meet Me* sessions in the Print Room and the

England 400–1600 gallery; we also offered a themed Museum tour called “A Walk in the Woods.” The Museum also regularly hosts the *Time for a Cuppa* programme, a free, friendly event that offers tea, cake, and conversation to older people.

## Young People Programmes

Last year, we were proud to launch two schemes aimed at engaging young people not currently in employment, education, or training. The first, *Museum Makers*, selected six young people (16–24 year olds) from an applicant pool of 45 to participate in the curation of some of the Museum’s displays. The second, *Creatives*, invited seven young people to use creative techniques and photography to engage with the subject of the history of gender. The result was a vibrant display titled “In Their Image,” which is on display outside the learning studio from 24 June 2024 to 20 January 2025.



Visitors on a volunteer led Highlights tour.



*“Doing something like this, that I’m interested in, with people who share that interest, both staff and peers, has been incredible. It’s changed my perspective.”*

**- A member of Museum Makers**

Both these programmes are public outputs of the AHRC-funded research project *Global Gender and the Goddess*, more information about which can be found on page 32.



### Family Programmes

Our public programme continues to prioritise families through ticketed and free family activities, events, and tours. In 2023-24, we welcomed 643 participants on our volunteer-led family tours.

We also added a new programme - *Toddler Time* - to its family offerings. *Toddler Time* is a subscription package that offers monthly social and learning activity sessions for families with children aged five and under. These sessions, which include singing time, story time, and guided explorations of the Ashmolean’s exhibits and collections, are especially focused on helping toddlers develop their vocabulary and social skills.

In this regard, the programme is guided by the Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) approach and operates in partnership with Oxford University’s Baby Lab.



### The Family Festival of Art and Archaeology

13-14 July 2024

In mid-July, the Ashmolean partnered with the Oxford Festival of the Arts to host the *Family Festival of Art and Archaeology*. The Festival celebrated the Museum’s temporary display of *The Wilton Diptych* through an array of medieval-themed activities.

The weekend saw families creating their own tiles using the traditional media of egg tempera and gilding, creating their own crowns, and listening to medieval music and stories. The festival also featured a digital display of artworks inspired by *The Wilton Diptych* that had been created by families at off-site workshops around Oxfordshire in the weeks running up to the festival.

*“My nine-year-old loves the activities so much that we will come back when she’s older to see more of the collection.”*

**- Participant feedback**



Other activities included decorating an illuminated letter inspired by medieval manuscripts, making a quill pencil, a demonstration of medieval bookbinding, and a public lecture by Eleanor Standley, the Ashmolean’s Curator of Medieval Archaeology.

Over the course of the weekend, the Museum welcomed over 7,000 visitors to the Festival.



Images: Painting and music activities during the One World Family Festival.

# OUR MEMBERS AND PATRONS PROGRAMMES



## Our Members Programme

In the period under review, we revamped the Members' events programme, shifting the focus onto the Ashmolean's own collections and expertise, as well as on highlights around the City of Oxford. Events included an Anagama kiln demonstration in Wytham Woods, a special Japanese tea ceremony in the Museum, and a trio of online lectures around the Wilton Diptych. Through these events and others, over 2,000 Members worldwide have enjoyed our programme.

The Membership Team has been concentrating this past year on two major projects to improve behind-the-scenes processes as well as enhance the Member experience. Digital membership cards were introduced in November 2023, and a new member online account function was launched in July 2024, both designed to make the online and digital experience better for Members. A new integrated CRM system will be brought in later in 2024 to overhaul and streamline day-to-day processes, allowing us to optimise resources and better tailor and target communications to both potential and existing Members.

## Our Patrons Programme

In 2023-24, our Patrons enjoyed an exciting programme of events that afforded them special, behind-the-scenes access to the Ashmolean as well as to other galleries and cultural heritage sites in the UK and abroad. The annual events programme included private, curator-led tours of the Ashmolean's exhibitions, including *Colour Revolution*, *Bruegel to Rubens*, and *Kabuki Legends*, as well as an opportunity to meet Flora Yukhnovich and Daniel Crews-Chubb, the two contemporary artists whose work was showcased in the first *Ashmolean NOW* show. The year concluded with the Annual Gala Dinner in November 2023. In 2024, highlights included a visit to the Royal Academy's *Impressionists on Paper* exhibition in January and a private tour of The Sarikhani Collection in June.

In April 2024, the Patrons embarked on a memorable spring trip to Munich and Bavaria. Accompanied by the Museum Director, Dr Xa Sturgis, and Matthew Winterbottom, the Museum's Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture, the group explored the region's impressive art collections, spectacular Rococo churches, and fairy-tale castles over the course of five event-packed days. These included a special tour of the Residenz München with its Chief Curator, Dr Christian Quaeitzsch; a private visit to Alte Pinakothek, Munich's Old Master's Gallery; a private tour of Linderhof Palace's sumptuous interiors; and a special visit to Munich's Print Room.



A special Japanese tea ceremony event for our Members. Left: The 2023 Annual Gala Dinner.

# OUR PEOPLE AND SUSTAINABILITY

At the Ashmolean Museum, we believe that a museum is more than just a place of objects: it is a vibrant community of people. This final section celebrates the talented team of museum professionals, commercial staff, and volunteers who work tirelessly to bring art, history, and culture to life for our visitors. Their expertise and dedication ensure that our collections continue to inspire, educate, and engage visitors of all ages.

In this section, too, you will find an update on the sustainability measures implemented by the Museum in the period under review in this report.



# OUR VOLUNTEERS

Whether guiding visitors through the galleries, assisting with events, or helping behind the scenes, our volunteers play a vital role in enriching the experience of everyone who visits the Ashmolean. Their enthusiasm and commitment enhance the Museum's welcoming atmosphere, making it a place where learning and discovery are always encouraged.



Our volunteer team has grown by nearly 15% from last year, with over 350 volunteers signed up to support the Museum in visitor-facing roles and behind the scenes. Our Western Art and Coin Room volunteer pool remains very strong; this year, we have seen a boost in volunteer recruitment in Eastern Art and Conservation.

While our Highlights tour continues to be the most popular of our tours, we are constantly trialing and adding new tour options. In 2023-24, for example, we added Saturday coin-handling sessions, in which attendees can handle historic coins from different times and places with the help of our volunteer team.

## At a Glance:

Over 8,000 hours logged for visitor-facing activity

Over 3,000 hours logged behind-the-scenes in different departments

Top: Coin handling sessions in the Money Gallery.

# A SUSTAINABLE MUSEUM

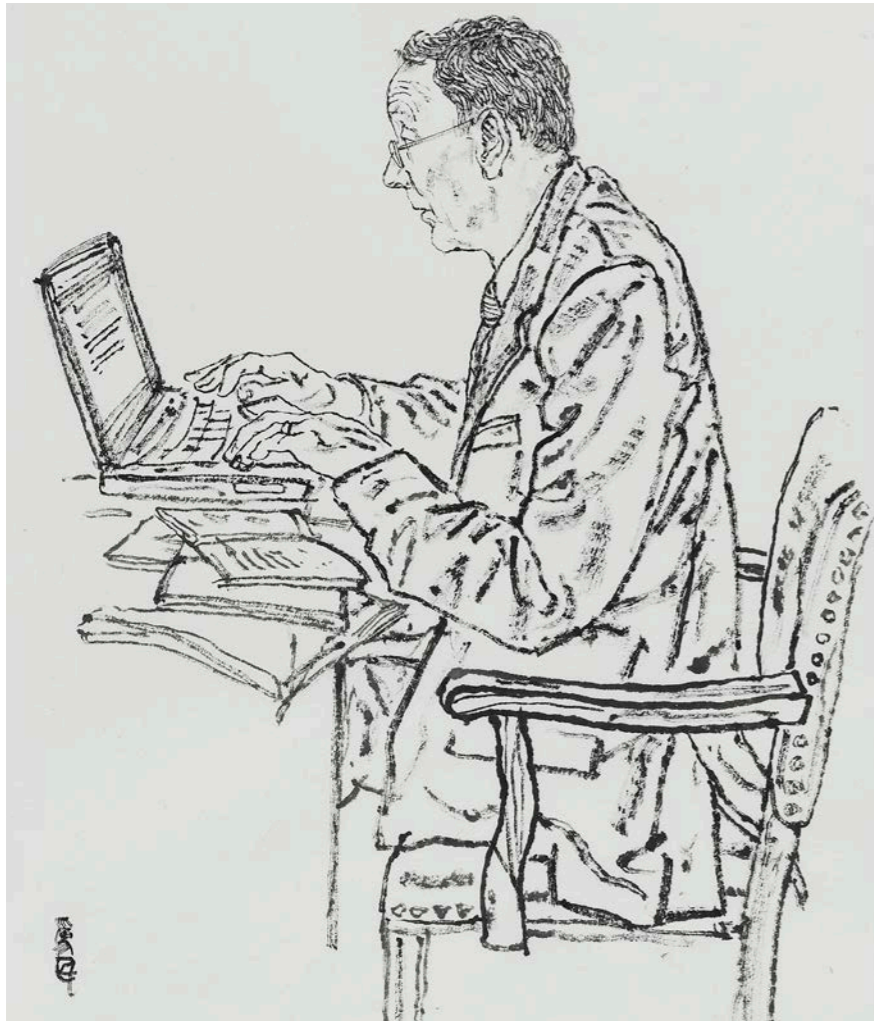
At the Ashmolean, we are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and are continuously working to make our operations, exhibitions, and services more environmentally sustainable. In the 2023-24 period, we have implemented several initiatives to realise this goal. We have:

- **Invested in energy-efficient lighting and heating systems** throughout the Museum in order to lower our carbon emissions and support renewable energy sources.
- **Refreshed our basement café with environmental sustainability in mind.** We renovated and recycled existing assets where possible. We also introduced carbon labelling, expanded plant-based options, and restructured our menus to prioritise items with a lower carbon footprint. More information about the environmentally sustainable elements of the café refresh can be found on page 56.
- **Developed a rating system to evaluate retail products based** on their lifespan, country of origin, materials, and end of life, allowing us to identify and replace less sustainable options with more eco-friendly alternatives.
- **Reduced paper waste** by offering a digital membership card and halting the default printing of receipts in the shop, café, and restaurant.
- **Invested in staff engagement programmes** such as Carbon Literacy Training and a new Climate Confidence session. We also launched an environmental sustainability network for colleagues to share experiences, celebrate successes, and embed plans for improved sustainability across the Museum.
- **Initiated several environmental sustainability working groups** to develop carbon reduction plans for the Ashmolean and for University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums more broadly.



Félix Pissarro, *Wooded Landscape: A Woman walking with a Dog*, c.1889-1897 © Ashmolean Museum.

# IN MEMORIAM



## NICHOLAS MAYHEW 1948–2024

Written by Chris Howgego

Nick Mayhew was a key contributor to the development of the Ashmolean, where he spent almost his entire career. He joined the Museum as Assistant Keeper in Late Medieval and Modern Coins in 1971. He subsequently became Keeper of the Heberden Coin Room (1999–2005), then Deputy Director of Collections (2004–2009), and finally Director of the Winton Institute for Monetary History. He was Professor of Numismatics and Monetary History from 2004 and a fellow of St Cross College from 1992, acting as Vice Master from 2002 to 2005. He retired in 2013.

Nick was a very senior, and much-loved, figure in the numismatic world, as well as in

the Museum. He was driven by a sense of duty. He supported the subject by editing the *Numismatic Chronicle*, the publication of the Royal Numismatic Society, and he duly became President of the Society from 2009 to 2013. After an early interest in continental imitations of Sterling in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE, on which he wrote the definitive work, he had gone on to produce fundamental studies of the coinage of England, Scotland, France, and the Low Countries. His interests in monetary history led him beyond the currency itself to make pioneering macroeconomic contributions, applying the quantity theory of money to the historical study of credit, debt, wages, and prices. His achievements were duly recognised by the award of the *Jeton de Vermeil* of the *Société française de numismatique* in 1995, and the medal of the Royal Numismatic Society in 2002.

Nick was a quiet pioneer within the Ashmolean too. In 1987, he was early in realising the potential of national research council funding for research projects within a museum context, supporting a series of other researchers in the process. He was instrumental, again, in promoting special displays in the Ashmolean, beyond the traditional exhibitions long-held by Western Art. Most notable was his display 'In the Red: a history of debt' in 2000. This was a small affair, held on the old 'Coin Room Landing', but his socially-aware emphasis on international debt relief attracted Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, to officiate at the opening. Gordon Brown arrived clutching a copy of Nick's book on *Sterling: the Rise and Fall of a Currency*. This, I thought at the time, reflected rather well on both parties.

Much of Nick's career was devoted to research and to family life. All that changed with the great 2005–09 redevelopment of the Ashmolean. The initiative and vision were

Christopher Brown's, and the display strategy was led by Susan Walker, but it was Nick who, as Deputy Director, strove valiantly and humanely to bring to fruition this hugely successful project. Nick pulled everyone along in a way which no one else could, and at considerable personal cost. He regarded this time as 'payback' for what he saw as years of support from the Museum.

Pictures speak louder than words. The portrait of Nick by Weimin He, the Chinese artist commissioned to record the partial demolition and rebuilding of the Ashmolean, shows Nick bent over his laptop with furrowed brow, working offsite with the troops on the Radcliffe Infirmary Site (pictured left). This captures him at the time, but I prefer to remember Nick in his element as he is in the photograph below, happy and smiling, operating lifting equipment to help his Coin Room colleagues move the coin collection.



Left: Weimin He, *Nick Mayhew, Deputy Director*, 2009. Presented by the artist, 2014.

# COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES

The Ashmolean's commercial enterprises had a fantastic year, generating £2.4m of income from retail and brand licensing, catering, venue hire, corporate membership, and publishing.

The two major exhibitions in the 2023-24 period – *Colour Revolution* and *Bruegel to Rubens* – performed well from a retail perspective, delivering £1.2m of sales in total. Our indulgent *Colour Revolution*-inspired afternoon tea was a particular highlight in our Rooftop Restaurant.

In the last twelve months, we introduced several new makers into our retail ranges that are committed to ethical production and environmental sustainability. Liga, an eco-friendly homeware designed and created in Cornwall; Stitch Happy embroidery kits, a company based in Warwickshire that uses only sustainable and ethical fabrics and packaging; and Gibson's Organic Liqueurs. We also made some exciting additions to our Christmas offerings, including a new range of hampers that included Ashmolean Gin, Ashmolean x Gibsons' Liqueur, Oxford Blue biscuits, and a range of Ashmolean jams, curds, and chutneys. Our refreshed lower ground floor shop was short-listed as a finalist in "Shop of the Year" at the Museums & Heritage Awards.

We also launched several new licensee partnerships that celebrate local, sustainable, and ethical craftsmanship and products: Jericho Coffee, China Petals, Atlantic Mats, Art & Hue, and Indian Block Print Textiles. In recognition of their excellent work, our Licensing Team were short-listed as finalists in five categories at the Brand & Lifestyle Licensing Awards.

Our Events team also had an incredible year, with uplift across the board and particular success in delivering weddings, corporate events, and Christmas parties.

In October 2023 we held our inaugural Weddings Showcase which highlighted our hand-picked suppliers and creators to help show how they, along with the Museum, could deliver a beautiful ceremony and evening event.



# THE BASEMENT CAFÉ REFRESH



In July 2024 our basement café opened after a refresh that made the space more environmentally responsible and visitor friendly. Located next to the Museum's shop, the café is a bustling hub where museumgoers gather to enjoy casual, informal dining options such as hot drinks, light lunches, and cakes and pastries.

With environmental responsibility at the forefront of our minds, we renovated and recycled existing assets where possible, with seating and furniture refurbished as opposed to being replaced. Graphenstone paint, one of the world's most certified eco-paint companies and part of the Ashmolean's Brand Licensing roster, was used throughout to rejuvenate the space in calming colours that have roots in the Ashmolean's collections.

Visitors' experience of the space played a large part in the physical refreshment of the café. Within the alcoves, we installed beautiful artwork from the collection surrounded by wood panelling. This feature not only enhances the space, but both the lightboxes and the panelling have sound absorption properties, making it a more user-friendly space for all visitors by reducing the amount of noise.

We also factored sustainability into the refreshment of the food and drink offer. For our catering partners, Benugo, responsible sourcing is a priority; many of their key items undergo a rigorous accreditation process. In addition, all "grab & go" and bakery items are now carbon counted, so customers can understand the impact of their food choices.

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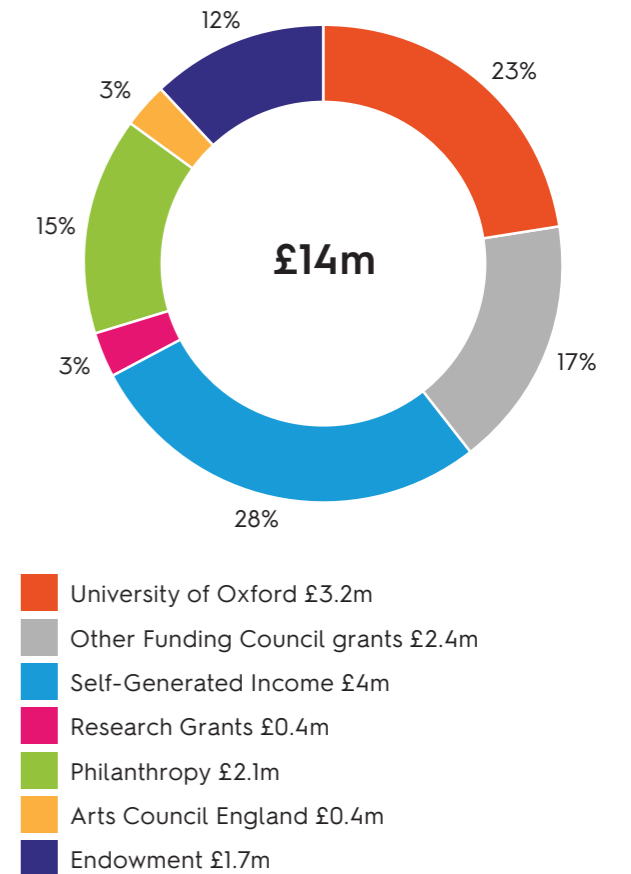
# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Total Income

Total income received in the year was £14m, up £0.7m on the previous year. This is mostly due to an increase in endowment income due to securing new endowments to support pay and conservation related costs, coupled with the growth in endowment income and the removal of the University's capital charge, boosting the net University of Oxford funding.

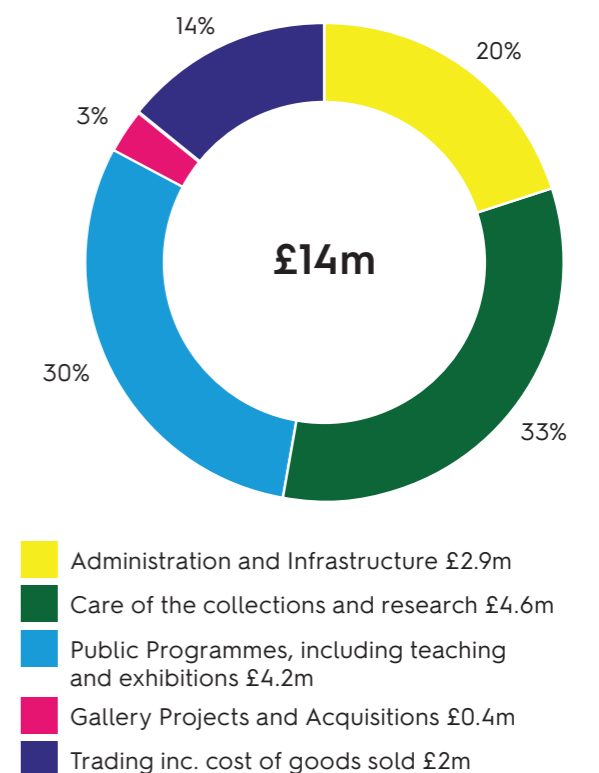
As the impacts of COVID-19, Brexit and the Russian/Ukraine conflict work through the economy, especially the public purse and visitor economy, all sources of Museum funding continue to be under great pressure. In continuing to build our endowment, fund-raising and public donations remain vital for the 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 £14m. This was £0.7m more than the previous year. This is mostly due to the inflationary pressure on pay costs across all areas, including a large increase in the exhibition costs due to the changing profile and timing of exhibition launches.







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