

The Citi exhibition
**Arctic: culture and
climate**

22 October 2020 – 21 February 2021
Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery

Lead supporter Citi
Supported by
Julie and Stephen Fitzgerald
AKO Foundation

In October 2020 the British Museum will open the first major exhibition on the history of the Arctic and its Indigenous Peoples, through the lens of climate change and weather. The Arctic has been home to resilient communities for nearly 30,000 years, cultures that have lived with the opportunities and challenges of one of the most dramatic environments on the planet. Today climate change is transforming the Arctic at the fastest rate in human history. **The Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate* is the first to look at the whole circumpolar region**, revealing how Arctic Peoples have adapted to climate variability in the past and meet the challenges of global climate change today. Through the knowledge and stories of Indigenous Arctic Peoples, the exhibition addresses the global issue of changing climates in a transforming world.

Bringing together the largest and most diverse circumpolar collection ever displayed in the UK, including objects from the British Museum's world-class Arctic collection and international lenders and commissions, this exhibition will reveal a wealth of artistic expression and ecological knowledge, from the past right up to the present day. From rare archaeological finds, unique tools and clothing adapted to flourish in the cold, artworks reflecting the respectful relationship between Arctic people and the natural world, to stunning photography of contemporary daily life, the exhibition will show the great diversity of cultures and ingenuity of communities responding to dramatic changes in seasonal weather and human-caused climate change.

The Arctic Circle is the most northern region in the world encompassing the area of midnight sun in summer and the polar night in winter that covers 4% of the Earth. It is home to 4 million people including 400,000 Indigenous Peoples belonging to one or more of 40 different ethnic groups with distinct languages and dialects. Most of the Arctic's Indigenous inhabitants are involved in hunting, fishing and reindeer herding. These subsistence activities are supplemented by employment in industries such as government infrastructures, energy, commercial fishing and tourism.

Arctic Peoples have traded and engaged across the Circumpolar North for millennia.

Scientists predict that the Arctic will be ice-free in 80 years, which will bring dramatic and profound change to the people that live there and will affect us all.

Twyla Thurmond, tribal coordinator, from Shishmaref, Alaska says “Shishmaref and other Alaska Native communities are demonstrating how people can stay strong and unified in their search for answers to climate change, the most challenging problem of the 21st century.”

The exhibition will feature many objects from across the circumpolar region, including an 8-piece Igloolik winter costume made of caribou (wild reindeer) fur, illustrating the relationship between humans and animals in the Arctic. The hunted animal provides food for the community as well as clothing, perfectly adapted to help humans survive the extreme cold. All available natural materials are put to use. A delicate and unique household bag from western Alaska, crafted from tanned salmon skin, demonstrates the beautiful properties that emerge from fishskin when skilled practitioners work and expose material to particular weather conditions.

Over the past 300 years, Arctic Peoples have faced dramatic social, economic, and political changes as a result of European and Russian exploration to the region, quests for the Northwest Passage, and the global fur trade. A key object from this period is the Inughuit (Greenlandic) sled made from narwhal and caribou bone and pieces of driftwood. It was traded to Sir John Ross on his 1818 expedition, marking the first encounter between Inughuit and Europeans. Arctic Peoples’ responses to the establishment of colonial governments and state-sponsored religions in the Arctic will feature, including a bronze carved Evenki spirit mask that was made from a 17th century Russian Orthodox icon. **Today, Arctic Peoples are transforming traditional heritage to meet contemporary needs and safeguard their culture.** From performances adapted from ritual practices to commercial artwork inspired by storytelling and material traditions.

Stunning contemporary photography of the Arctic landscape and local communities will form part of the immersive exhibition design. There will be a number of new artworks commissioned for the exhibition. These include a limestone Inuksuk, an iconic Arctic monument of stacked stones used to mark productive harvesting locations or to assist in navigation, built by Piita Irniq, from the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, Canada. A new installation from the art collective Embassy of Imagination will present traditional clothing designs made from Japanese paper and printmaking by Inuit youth in Kinngait (Cape Dorset) and Pangnirtung,

The Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate* will tell inspirational stories of human achievement while celebrating the region’s natural beauty. It will encourage debate about the future of this globally significant landscape in the light of the global climate change. Arctic Peoples have faced different kinds of change, developing strategies and tools to mitigate the disruptive effects of social and environmental change from which we can all learn.

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Amber Lincoln, Curator, Americas Section, British Museum, said 'Through the generosity of Indigenous Arctic People and Arctic scholars, this exhibition weaves together compelling stories, objects and landscapes of the Circumpolar North, at a time when the Arctic is changing before our very eyes.'

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, said '**The Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate*** is a bold and ambitious exhibition that reflects the expanding vision of the British Museum. The show directly addresses the essential question of how humans can live with the impacts of extreme weather. The future and past come together in the present, united by the shared experiences of Arctic peoples. I would like to thank Citi, whose on-going support has allowed the Museum to realise this ground-breaking exhibition.'

James Bardrick, Citi Country Officer, United Kingdom says: "As a global bank, we play an essential role in financing a sustainable economy and supporting indigenous peoples' rights. We are particularly proud to partner with the British Museum for the forthcoming Arctic: culture and climate exhibition that sheds light on the formidable artistic expression and ecological knowledge of the Arctic populations. We are committed to financing and facilitating clean energy, infrastructure and technology projects that support environmental solutions and reduce the impacts of climate change, on rich and diverse communities such as those that inhabit the circumpolar Arctic."

Notes to Editors:

The Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate* runs from 22 October 2020 – 21 February 2021 in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery at the British Museum.

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Open Saturday – Thursday 10.00 – 17.30,
Friday 10.00 – 20.30

Tickets are £18, under 16s free, 2-for-1 tickets for students on Fridays and concession rates available

britishmuseum.org/Arctic
+44 (0)20 7323 8181

The beautifully illustrated accompanying book *Arctic: culture and climate* by

is published by Thames & Hudson in collaboration with the British Museum. £35, hardback.

For more information on the book please contact:

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Citi

Citi, the leading global bank, has approximately 200 million customer accounts and does business in more than 160 countries and jurisdictions. Citi provides consumers, corporations, governments and institutions with a broad range of financial products and services, including consumer banking and credit, corporate and investment banking, securities brokerage, transaction services, and wealth management.

The Citi exhibition series is a five year programme of support for major exhibitions at the British Museum. The series extends a relationship that started in 2012 with the support of the Citi Money Gallery and is a further commitment to supporting the important work that the museum undertakes. The series will be a fantastic opportunity to use the Museums truly global collection to explore a diverse range of subjects that bring historical context to contemporary themes. We are incredibly proud to partner with the British Museum and in supporting its role as one of the most important global guardians of human history. We value the fact that our support enables the museum to continue with its ground-breaking exhibitions and renowned education programmes.



Follow updates on the exhibition via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
Use #ArcticExhibition and @britishmuseum

For more content about *Arctic: culture and climate*, follow the British Museum blog at blog.britishmuseum.org

Further information

Contact the Press Office:

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High resolution images and caption sheet available at <http://bit.ly/2SZNm7r>