

BRITISH MUSEUM NATIONAL PROGRAMMES CONFERENCE 2019

Exploring equality and diversity in museum practice across the UK

#NPConference2019

Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Monday, 4th November 2019

TELLING LGBTQ+ STORIES NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL & MIDDLESBOROUGH INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART

NML - *Pride and Prejudice: Bringing Stories Out of the Closet*, Charlotte Keenan & Kay Jones, Museum of Liverpool

MIMA - *Exhibition Case Study: Living Beyond Limits*, Helen Welford & Claire Mead

KAY: I want to start off with our new mission statement, hot off the press. So, our mission statement. National Museums Liverpool: Creating memorable experiences for everyone, challenging expectations.

We have got a long history of developing our LGBT exhibitions within our organisation. Do you remember Hello Sailor?!

We underwent a system of consultation asking people what they really wanted, how they wanted to be involved but primarily we also really wanted to know what we had in our collections and also, importantly, what we didn't have in our collections and also what voices we could use to tell the stories around those objects differently.

This is us at Liverpool Pride in 2016. We talked to lots of people and we used images from our collection which hopefully you can see in the bunting. People responded really well to the well-known objects and came across and started telling us their personal stories. We really knew it was really, really important to local people. We applied to the Esme Fairbank fund and got £60,000. These are the nine themes that we put them under. This is over 300 artworks and social history objects across our collections, right up to changing attitudes and sex and eroticism. Sex and eroticism were always the favourite one that people looked at! This really improved our documentation around our collections, increased our understanding and

enabled lots of people to be involved in the conversation.

These are few of the items from the Walker Art Gallery collections. Obviously, David Hockney there, Hermaphrodite from the Lady Lever Art Gallery, and Martyrdom of St Sebastian, and items from George Melly who identifies as bisexual.

By talking to local people, we kept hearing about these underground bars at the time and you'll see the adverts at the side of the theatre programme. Inevitably, all of these stories and venues were very much hidden in plain sight so that was something that was never documented in our collections. By talking to people, it really brought that out together. This official programme at the bottom is the opening of Otterspool Riverside Promenade, which is a location in Liverpool by the river and it is actually quite a well-known public sex environment now. We kind of told a different story around that and how people still can't live their lives openly around this very official document to what it means to people now today.

If you want to go on our website, there's lots of downloadable resources, timelines, legal and social change, terminology and also, most importantly, our education resources, which is a LGBT+ language and law for key stage 3, and LGBT+ memory box where people living with dementia from the local community can use that.

I talked about embedding content across the museums and galleries, and this is what we did. We created LGBT+ Trail with the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Museum Liverpool, Sudley House and Walker Art Gallery. This is the first time that any of our trails connected the different venues too, which is really important. This is the Walker. They reinterpreted a lot of their existing objects on display and you will see on the right-hand side this is a dedicated area for LGBT works on display.

This is the Museum of Liverpool Trail. April Ashley, and the first rainbow flag above Liverpool Town Hall, and wedding bouquets from a same-sex marriage. Our Trail needs improving, it is only across one gallery space in the museum, because we found it difficult to find objects in our archaeological collections and it is something we need to improve on.

I talked about the importance of identifying gaps in the collection. This is an artwork of Pete Burns we commissioned from a local gay artist, Ben Eudon (?}. I can't believe we didn't have Pete Burns represented in the collection but we do now!

The collection was invaluable of developing the conversations and this new content especially in our new collections. I will talk about Tales from the

City which was at the Museum of Liverpool. It was in 2007, it was the first time we had told the story of Liverpool's LGBT community from 1967 with the change in the law to the present day. We had a steering group of local people who really helped to shape the content of the exhibition, they decided the title of the exhibition, the lead marketing image and from lots of different conversations kind of key content within the exhibition too.

This is the main space within the exhibition itself, big themes, people who were prosecuted for being gay, even after the change in the law, people who underwent aversion therapy, and questioning how did the law impact on people's lives. Did it make any difference? Local activists, Section 28, AIDS and HIV, changing attitudes and right up to the present day the stories of young trans people today; personal stories were embedded in everything we did.

These are some local artworks from Ben Eudon, who I mentioned earlier. In the middle is Vivienne, any Drag Race fans! This is the central costume area. We had early T-shirts from Liverpool Pride in the '90s. We have a wedding dress from Sophie Green, who is a trans activist, and the RAF uniform of Caroline Paige, the first trans officer within the RAF. It was told very much from their personal stories.

We had a timeline of legal and social change, locally and nationally, a resource area, a family storytelling and a response area, that kind of thing.

This is just a range of some of the people we worked with. I mean, obviously, there were still voices that we didn't represent but we worked with over 80 people from the local community to really tell their stories and reinterpreting the collections and creating objects where we didn't have representation was incredibly important, so the item on the right is actually a textile artwork. We tracked down the barmaid of a pub called The Magic Clock, everybody talked about The Magic Clock. We only had a photograph of the exterior. The barmaid created this artwork representing the interior. It is different bits of material to represent regulars and the bar with the central area and it gives this really different experience of the bar and all of the people's stories.

I'm running out of time, sorry. We also hid objects within the exhibition to really acknowledge the fact that people still can't live their lives openly and people responded really well to this. We had a community case which was left empty when the exhibition opened and we invited people to tell their stories and show us their objects and that worked really well. We changed it over about five or six times. And then memory maps, this was another great way of people being able to represent their own gay scene, what

places and spaces meant to them in different ways and we had these really large on the wall.

And then finally, again, of course, it is a temporary exhibition but what about the legacies, how do we embed these? We worked with the people who helped us shape the exhibition on Out in the Past with the hub for the fourth year running now so people are involved in that. Trans Day visibility and remembrance and we offer our spaces for free to the local community too. I will hand over to Charlotte now.

CHARLOTTE: Hi. I'm going to tell you a little bit about what we were doing at the Walker during the same period and then finish up with a kind of overview of the legacies of the project and some of the challenges we have encountered and what we're doing for the future.

This is the Walker. So, adding to what Kay said, consultation was really integral to everything we have done at the Walker Art Gallery. We had a number of really strong relationships with the local community groups and stakeholders from our work to date and we did engage with them throughout the project. We wanted to go beyond that and we hosted a kind of number of informal events which were open to anybody to join, publicised through social media and other channels, encouraging people to come in and hear about the project, hear about our plans and I was really struck by what Bonnie was just talking about, "Listen with intent". We changed plans partway through the project to make sure what we were doing is reflective of the people we were talking to and their feelings. An example of that was, using the research, we have rewritten interpretation and we have changed our displays at the gallery. Initially, we had had intended to do that without any kind of LGBT sort of signage or symbolism and we had been through discussions that was a strategy to sort of usualise LGBT+ and queer content within the gallery and not to other it in any way, but through informal networking events we had real feedback from communities that they actually really wanted to see that representation and visibility in the gallery. Particularly from young people, they found it really a positive thing that really empowered them. We changed that.

Critically, we also had focus groups running. They came in towards the end of the project and if you're doing something similar, I would suggest doing it earlier in the project. It was one of our learnings. Those focus groups were run by an external research company and we were able to kind of put groups together that weren't already engaging with us and also who weren't self-selecting and who didn't respond to our calls to action through social media to become involved. These were people who were not involved with the museums and galleries already and they were, dare I say it, outside of the museum echo chamber and they brought different perspectives as well.

Kay spoke about gaps in the collection and it was something we were really aware of, too. The Pride and Prejudice project enabled us to uncover rich stories and history in the collection. We knew there were going to be stories that we couldn't tell. We were fortunate at the gallery to be awarded a New Collecting Award from the Art Fund to buy new work for the collection. It gave us time to develop the collection and think about the purpose of our LGBT+ work and we decided two things quite early on. Firstly, we didn't want to correct gaps we knew existed in the established canon of LGBT+ history. We don't have a Francis Bacon. Do we want one? Yes. But will we be upset if we don't get one? No. We addressed the invisibility of trans and non-binary artists within our collections and also queer artists of colour as well. So those were important places for us to focus on our collecting. This is an example of something we acquired. It's a twin-channel installation work by Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, which features Sharon Hayes as well. It draws heavily on testimonies of Chelsea Manning and [inaudible] talking about their experiences of coming out.

Another really important thing that came through our strategic collecting was shifting our focus to think not just about the identity of artists or sitters but about artworks that actually engaged explicitly with sexuality and gender. It became a guiding principle for activity. Doing that allowed us to give visible representation in the gallery itself to these themes, but also allows art to act as a catalyst for conversations around sexuality and gender. We believe art is a really powerful tool. It can help us to see the world differently through someone else's perspective and it can change minds and opinions. So, for us, choosing artworks for that purpose enabled us to have a really important conversation in the gallery. So that was a guiding principle not just for our collecting but also for the works we selected for Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender & Identity, an exhibition that Walker Art Gallery later toured to Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. You can see some of the works that were included in the exhibition, including Steve McQueen's, John Walter and Hilary Lloyd on the screen now.

The exhibition was drawn primarily from the Arts Council collection and our collection. We knew ultimately it would, therefore, reflect and repeat the historic biases of those collections. Instead, we developed a space at the centre of the exhibition which we left symbolically empty to reflect on the gaps and blind spots in our collections and in our collective understanding of LGBT+ history and art history particularly. We handed that space over to our audiences to kind of programme and fill with their own stories and experiences. So, at the beginning of the exhibition, we developed with some queer designers a flexible sort of hanging system and arrangement that could adopt and adapt lots of different types of activity. We left budget available. We left space with lots of space in the programme. We offered

admin and planning support to people who approached us with ideas of things they wanted to realise but we also backed off as well and handed that space over to other people. This was a space that we called FORUM because we wanted it to do be a democratic space that everyone had equal voice and it wasn't about the institution telling histories, but listening with intent as Bonnie Greer said earlier as well.

We had groups coming in and doing banner magic workshops. Film screenings of moonlight performances by artists as well as pop-up exhibitions by local artists and one of the most important relationships that came out of the whole project was with GYRO and THE Action Youth, local LGBT and trans youth groups in the city who only meet 5 minutes from the gallery. Many of them had never been and it was through some of those informal network events that we developed a relationship with them.

And Forum for them became a really social space over the summer holidays where they would come and meet and a lot of those young people are now active parts of our gallery communities who are really involved in suggesting things for its future.

So I'm now going to go through a lot of dense slides, really quickly because time is tight.

Organisational legacies, apart from the stuff you have heard about trails, et cetera, there has been a broader organisational impact. There was an LGBT+ staff group in existence before Pride and Prejudice but it had become irregular and it had not necessarily had a lot of direction but I think that organisational support of these big projects empowered everybody to come back together and revitalise that group and it's now more active and involved in decision-making within the organisation.

We have two education sessions that Kay mentioned that have been embedded into the core offer. Equally, the House of Women, LGBT+, is now called Make Space because it's about making space in our collection, in our history and in our museum for other stories beyond the canon and beyond the collection. We are also changing our buildings, introducing all gender bathrooms and that's embedded into documents and planning documents for all of the future developments of our venues.

Looking ahead, some them persist and we are taking these on a case-by-case basis, really. And I think some of them are going to be really familiar to you. I can't go through all of them because I've been flashed a one-minute card but take a picture and ask me about it later.

But for the future, which is I think the most important part really, we are

continuing to look at how we can embed the expectations for LGBT+ programming into everything we do as an organisation.

We're doing that in a number of ways. Firstly, through improved staff training and that's things like the giving more training around gender awareness, and improving our diversity through recruitment so we're going through the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme at the moment, we're also looking how we can extend Pride and Prejudice, look at other collection areas and, as I said, it's about looking how we can really embed change into everything we do by rewriting things like policies, documents, making changes to displays and creating that expectation.

We're also trying to keep looking for new relationships. Keep pushing ourselves to meet new friends. I'm going to leave you with some lovely feedback we have had and just to say that National Museums Liverpool has been an important space in the city for LGBT+ communities, we are trying to use that to advocate for others, coordinating the Pride presence for Liverpool arts and culture, et cetera. Thank you. [Applause]

HELEN: Thank you for coming here today. My name is Helen Welford and I work as an assist curator at MIMA, the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art. In my role I have research interest in female National Trust practice and representations of queer in the Middlesbrough Collection.

CLAIRE: I'm Claire Mead and an independent art and design curator, queer feminist activist. Both pronouns are she/her.

HELEN: Today we'll be giving you a case study of an exhibition we did as MIMA from October 2018 to February 2019. The exhibition was called Living Beyond Limits and in this we looked at the Middlesbrough permanent collection working with LGBTQIA+ constituents living and working in the local area and they helped to share the look, tone and feel of the exhibition. It's important to know that for us the term "queer" was used in a political sense so it was to be used to encompass a range of identities and experiences as well.

CLAIRE: I was MIMA curator in residence and it all began with a talk I gave at MIMA in 2017 that was all around the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality and how different cultural institutions were talking about it and really thinking about what was next. And, following that, I was able to apply and get a grant from the British Council to collaborate on a project around queering space with MIMA and its local LGBTQIA+ community.

HELEN: Here we are at MIMA and what is our input? Our ethos? We

position ourselves as The Constituent Museum, our senior curator, Elinor Morgan, describes the museum as a cultural institution that listens, responds, joins and we have a civic connection, an agenda to connect people, ideas and art together and to put art into action.

Within the museum we have this permanent art collection and this really sits at the heart of our artistic programme. We, within the collection like many UK collections, we have a small presence of voices from queer, black, Asian and other minorities represented in the collection. What we wanted to do in this exhibition was to bring these voices out and give them a platform within our museum space. And so going onto the exhibition itself working with our constituents, we first of all set about defining the aims of the exhibition. And you can see these here this slide. But the main aims were to reveal, disrupt and to transform.

CLAIRE: Which sounds great but, in practice, how do we do that? The whole idea of using queer as a practical term was not only to include these works in terms of content but also in terms of form and seeing museum space as a collective and political space through a queer lens. Introducing political and fluid preparations of queerness in the gallery to try and counter historical histories of institutional exclusion and colonial violence that inherently part of these spaces as human professionals we're all trying to deconstruct. And it was based around introducing collaborative process in the situations and making it co-curation and democratisation of access in museums and culture at large.

MIMA's very much based around the idea of a socially useful art practice and in this idea of changing audiences from passive, absorbing the knowledge that comes from high above the curators on a top down basis and making it more horizontal, so making audiences active participants in actually creating new content that's shown within the galleries.

So this whole challenge for us as curators was curatorial best practice in queering the art museum and also seeking to disrupt the space intentionally and unintentionally censors marginal voices.

When I pitched this at a Flexus grant at MIMA, there was a workshop series working with MIMA and the local LGBT+ community. It was only later on that it emerged into the exhibition as a final outcome so I think it's interesting to see that the workshops came first.

HELEN: How did we reach our queer constituents? Through social media platforms and we also contacted local activist groups and local charities, related to LGBTQIA+ and we used our personal and professional networks, too. We tended to have a consistent group of around four or five people,

with other people coming in and out as they wished but we did have this core group which worked really well for us.

CLAIRE: And it's important to note that, from the beginning, we wanted to make sure it wasn't rigid workshop format, we sought from the beginning to be self-critical, how people engaged with us and shifting and adapting the workshop formats, really based on people's needs and people's criticisms throughout the entire process.

HELEN: So now we'll talk about our queering strategy and how we co-curated with our communities. As well as defining the aims of the exhibition, our first discussion with our queer constituents involved defining what it means to curate queerness. We talked about the idea that you can't universalise queer or reduce to one narrative, it's broader than this, so we defined queer as a political term within the context of the exhibition. So as well as gender identity and sexual orientation, we would reflect on sexism, racism, classism and xenophobia.

CLAIRE: Stories have been left out from the Middlesbrough Art Gallery and artists in the framework have been overlooked based on social, sexual and racial prejudices that are embedded in institutional behaviour so how we break that down and challenge that.

So this led following discussions to the focused on disrupting norms around gender, identity and sexuality. This included challenge and deconstructing idea of masculinity, looking at different facets of feminism and femininity, and really exploring ideas around displacement which related strongly to local contexts a site of multiple sites of migration.

HELEN: We embarked on a series of collections where our permanent collection is housed with the aim to uncover artworks, stories which had been overlooked in recent years.

For example, we have this piece here on the left by artist Lizzie Rowe, this had never been seen in the Middlesbrough Gallery before but it had been commissioned by the former Middlesbrough Gallery and she responded to her transition from male to female and the impact this had on her personal relationships.

Within the context of the exhibition we positioned this work with work by Chila Kumari Singh Burman and Ana Mendieta and we placed it in the work of femininity and feminism. You can see this next slide is Lizzie Rowe, we talked to her about this work and this was her feeling that she has expressed her in this quote.

CLAIRE: A second example we wanted to put forward is work by Michelle

Williams Gamaker, the only loan work part of the exhibition. House of Women, which is essentially a fictional recasting of a role, the role of Canshe, I believe, from this 1947 film called Black Narcissus which had this black female role without dialogue and also played by a white actress in brown face, radical notions of identity including queerness with essentially a completely British/Asian cast the women and non-binary people so this idea that queering also requires having a look at decolonising racist narratives and forms, models and assumptions to reflecting on the world around us.

HELEN: Next example is a work by Barbara Kruger on the top left, she is represented in the collection and this work has been seen quite a lot. But during the course of the project, working with our constituents, we discussed this work and we realised that she heavily influenced the ACT UP movement in the US, ACT UP being a grassroots political organisation which fought against the AIDS pandemic and produced these posters, Read My Lips. Just below the Barbara Kruger image here is an example of a piece of work which ACT UP produced and you can see in this imagery how Barbara Kruger has informed ACT UP and they were both informed by the culture of advertising so in the exhibition we wanted to show the link between activism and art.

CLAIRE: Which is why we included this work, this poster that Barbara Kruger produced for visual aids in 1992, it's an organisation that highlights issues surrounding HIV AIDS epidemic and making it visible so we had them side by side and created a day without art starting in 1989 which was essentially putting together network of a galleries, artists, to create the black out day of art in a sign of mourning commemoration and an act of resistance to highlight issues around the AIDS epidemic.

It was important to show these correlations of art within the collection and activism and showing it in a specific way, as it would have just been plastered in the street, really.

>> Next, we have this work by -- he wanted to make these to show there was no hierarchy between the museum voice and the voices of those who we worked with. There is no distinction between the two levels at the museum and the constituents.

>> Getting people to co-curate and write the labels themselves, it was really interesting because it also really challenging our own assumptions about what should be included within this queer framework as curators. People often look as queer as a physical representation of the body and a physical embodiment of queerness and to look at more abstract

examples. One of these examples is this vase by Nicholas Arrojava-Portela. Our constituent chose to remain anonymous. The way in which they related this idea of fluidity within the form of the object itself to a type of gender, gender and sexual fluidity and ambiguity and really interestingly this relates a bit to the artist's statement around this idea of water defining the shape of the vessel, rather than the other way around.

>> Our next example is this brooch in the collection by the artist Lucy Harvey. The brooch contains Prozac pills. Stephen Allan showed the parallel between mental health issues and the LGBTQIA+ community as he saw it and experienced it. We included this image here and this work in the exhibition.

>> I think a really important part of this exhibition as well was having another look at known art histories and narratives and it also includes modernist narratives. For example, we had this audio interpretation by a constituent Richard Henderson who was able to look at the different legacies of masculinity from gay and bisexual artists, or artists engaging with these ideas of masculinity ambiguity and being able to inform specifically with this work of Sailors at a Bar, which was about queer coding and queer connections within public space. He would relate this to his own identity as a biracial and bisexual artist growing up in the north-east.

We had our zine making which led to a Zine Library in the exhibition. It was based on feedback in our group sessions. Why do we have to talk and can't we just non-verbally make things and express things this way? This medium made sense to us. It was something that was cheap, easy and accessible to make. This zine making in the workshop sessions led to the zine making session in the exhibition space to actively contribute to the display. We started off a collection of work by zine makers, which brought out voices and experiences. It was really reflected in the zines that our constituents also left throughout and it was around this idea of mental health, self-care, and displacements.

>> As well as having the Zine Library within the exhibition space, we brought it to other spaces within the building in order to introduce people to the ideas behind the exhibition for those who wouldn't want to necessarily engage with it. We also had an archive vitrine. We would look at the archive material attached to the individual artworks and pull out some of the hidden stories within them. These included newspaper articles, letters and exhibition catalogues, for example.

We have this piece on the left here, which is a piece of acquisition paperwork related to the artist Robert Colquhoun. In this, his long-term partner Robert MacBryde is positioned as more of a friend or a close friend

rather than being in a loving relationship with him, so we wanted to present this work in the vitrine in order to make the museum accountable for past censorship.

>> It is also important to mention what we excluded. For example, we chose not to include newspaper articles interviewing Lizzie Rowe talking about her work, because many of them used her [inaudible] name and misgendered her and we wanted to be mindful of how our audiences react to that and showcase her own voice to the Middlesbrough Art Gallery in the '90s.

>> As part of the Transgender Day of Remembrance in November, we changed the Vitrine by inviting the chair of a local trans charity Trans Aware to curate for us. Within the display case and within the ceremony, Elisha Lowther recited the names of all of those who had lost their lives in the year just gone through suicide or violence against them. It was a very moving ceremony and it became a very safe space for activism.

>> So essentially, what's next? We actually ended up with the last day of the exhibition with a bang, with a Study Day and invited a local network of artists, researchers and activists to think about the question of what was next in queering the museum and seeing this as the first step of bringing those conversations further. Really, what we learnt is that this queering is not only in content but in inclusion of these narratives and also in form and the way in which the museum engages with this in different formats. So, for example, one kind of strong legacy is the fact that the Zine Library is now part of the exhibition archives and people can still actively contribute to it as they have done actually recently as part of Pop-up Pride.

>> We also, as an institution, need to think positively about the future and shift the stories that we tell within our collection, both the artists and the artworks. We also have to look at our collecting strategy and think about how we bring out those voices that have been hidden up until now.

>> And, you know, the change can be affected in many ways, one of them was changing the Nayland Blake pronouns in the database for future reference. It is also for future collections.

>> We would like you to see it with three final thoughts which we do not have time for...!

>> Shall we go?

>> We will go anyway. So, we have introduced co-curation and collaboration.

>> To aim to address the way the art museum functions, who we represent and who we invite into our spaces.

>> Really, it must be a long-term political discussion between the museum and the constituents, constantly challenging whose voice is being heard and whose voice deserves more of a platform. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> [Inaudible].

>> Can you all hear me? We did have -- there are a couple of different aspects to this, really. We certainly have artists in the collection who are now dead and the families and the estates -- this is something that the National Trust has also encountered -- where the families and estates don't want that work to be discussed in that way. We also have living artists, quite high-profile artists who either didn't want to be included in Coming Out or who have asked not to be included in our Pride and Prejudice web pages. We are taking it on a case by case basis because, first of all, we don't want to -- it's a difficult situation. I think there is a strong argument with historic cases to make those histories visible, and we have a responsibility to do that and we fundamentally believe if we are not making those things visible not only does it reinforce a sense of shame and that you should hide it or people who are LGBT, but it also reinforces a heteronormative expectation that all people are straight. We tend to talk about those things but we're not going to do a big exhibition about that aspect of an artist if we don't have the support of the estate and we can't facilitate it and we can't get the artwork and do those things.

It is something we want to do but we physically can't and we have been stopped from doing it.

With some living artists, I can't name them, unfortunately because I will get in trouble, we do have to [inaudible] because we don't have the support. It tends to be -- I think artists don't want their work to be seen through this one lens. I think there is another fear it is reductive. I would argue that the artists are often talked about in these ways anyway. Yeah, it is a case by case basis. I wish I could give you a better answer than that.

>> I mean, we could give an example of Shyla's work in the exhibition. She actually had an exhibition right next door to the exhibition. I think the idea of using queer as this framework to engage with gender and sexuality more widely, we're wary of not imposing labels on people, but more see it as a starting point to almost fragment these perceptions to lots of different

facets. So, Shyla was thrilled to be included in conversation with Lizzie Rowe, who has such a beautiful way of expressing this femininity, in contrast with Shyla's work and was talking about her identity in different ways. It made sense without imposing a label on anybody and we want to kind of free people from those labels as well and engage more around this idea of challenging norms and also acknowledging the fact that nothing is set in stone. There is lots of fluidity as well in terms of LGBTQ, and it is also labelling that historically people wouldn't necessarily have related to but they would have performed queerness in different ways as well.

FLOOR: Just a quickie for Charlotte and Kay. You are part of a hub city for outing in the past for next year?

>> A hub, yes.

FLOOR: Leeds is having its second year as a hub next year. Would it be possible to tap you outside of today to sort of exchange clever ideas? Thank you.

>> That's okay.

>> That's unfortunately all we have time for. Could we give them a round of applause?

[Applause]

>> Can I just make a quick plug? I've recently set up a subgroup to the British Art Network for a Queer British Art subgroup. We're having our first meeting in Liverpool this Thursday. If you want to get involved and join the newsletter and get involved in future events search Queer British Art on Twitter.

>> Can I do a plug as well? I only just started a network that is connecting women and non-binary people and issues around queer feminist issues. We're babies. We're brand new. Come and chat after, during or after lunch. Come and look at the zines, they're fun!

>> Lunch is available outside. Thank you.

[LUNCH]

CHARITABLE TRUSTS MANAGING MUSEUMS: HOW SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS CREATE USEFUL AND RELEVANT MUSEUMS

COMMUNITY LEISURE UK & CYNON VALLEY MUSEUM

Jennifer Huygen, Community Leisure UK & Emma Hutchinson, Culture Warrington Charitable Trust;

Charlotte Morgan, Sara Maggs & William Tregaskes, Cynon Valley Museum

JENNIFER: So we will be presenting first on Charitable Trusts managing museums and then, after that, our colleagues from Cynon Valley Museum will present on their story and after we learn about Charitable Trust and how they manage museums. We'll have a panel where we will be presenting the ins and outs of a Charitable Trust, managing your local museum.

So, all of our colleagues here. So, we have Emma from Culture Warrington, Will from Cynon Valley Museum and Sara and my name is Jennifer and I'm Engagement Policy Manager at Community Leisure UK.

So before I start let me quickly explain what Community Leisure UK is so you know why I'm standing here in front of you today.

We are a membership association and we represent culture and across Scotland and England and Wales and at the moment we manage at least 44 museums across those three home nations but if everyone responded to our survey it's quite a significant number of museums that's being managed and we're very proud to be here today and to represent them.

So let me just get on with it because time is very tight today and as I mentioned I'll first touch on what Charitable Trusts are and then I'll give more examples of how Trusts manage museums and how, through constant engagement with their communities, they actually contribute to democratising the museums themselves. And let's see if it works this time.

So what are Charitable Trusts? First of all they are not your local authority managing your community museum. Actually, many Trusts have been established because the local authority may have decided to transfer the community asset so, in this case, the museum, to an Independent Trust, who can then fully focus on just providing the services that come with the asset.

So that means that the Trust is independent from the local authority in its decision making and the development of the services as well. But it's also really important to mention that Trusts still work very closely with the local authority and they're a key partner in providing a successful and relevant overall cultural portfolio within your community. So because Trusts are independent in their decision making, they can actually fully focus on creating quality programmes and services in a way that they can take more risks. And they can try out new programmes to engage a wider audience.

And so being a charitable organisation, they also have access to specific pots of funding and they can use income streams not usually available to a private organiser or the local authorities so think for example about Gift Aid.

And also, because Trusts are very rooted in their community, I would say they are community anchor organisations, they can pick up on community needs as and when they arise and because they are independent they can then make agile decisions in response to those needs. I think most importantly, what comes with being a charitable organisation is that you have your charitable purpose and identity and one very powerful quote from one of our members shows the charitable purpose is really important and it says:

"A trust will align itself with the cultural strategy of the local authority, putting purpose before profit. So the trust will actively seek ways to engage with stakeholders and the community and profit is a by-product of this collaboration and not reason for it."

And I know it might sound weird talking about profit when talking about museums as well. But just to make clear that even when Trusts do make a profit they are non-profit distributing organisations and actually in fact the Trust model is founded on Trust subsidies so think about your gift shops and cafes, community and outreach work that you do but they cross subsidise individuals so they will use the income from those who can afford to pay to provide reduced costs or free activities for those with less disposable income.

Before I go into really the examples of Trust managing museums I very briefly want to touch on how Trusts support their local authorities and communities in provide a fully accessible and relevant cultural profile in their community.

When I say culture I know it is a contested word. We actually take a very broad approach to it, so the type of cultural assets that we manage is vast

and museums and galleries are just one part of it but the Trusts also manage theatres, town and community halls, visitor centres and heritage buildings as well. And with that, of course, comes a lot of different services and different activities that they do.

But besides managing their own facilities, Trusts, because they are such community orientated organisations, they deliver a lot of community outreach work as well so that is you usually done in schools and care homes but also in our town centres, on our High Street as in our parks which is a very important integral part of what we do.

And finally, Trusts do not work by themselves, they collaborate and partner with a lot of different organisations so they would receive funding from the local authority, from national development bodies, they are a number of other organisations to receive advice and to network.

But they also work a lot with different organisations, locally, so they could collaborate with schools, for example, to provide and jointly deliver programmes but they work with health orientated groups such as local dementia groups or your local health boards.

So now we have had a quick course on what Charitable Trusts are, let's just look at how they work with museums and what actually happens when trusts manage museums.

So I imagine that a castle is not the first thing that pops in your head when you think about museums. But actually I would like to talk about challenging what a museum can be. This is Stafford castle, managed by Freedom Leisure and they use the museums and galleries but also the grounds and the heritage of the general area as a starting point for outdoor learning programmes and they do that in collaboration with local schools. And so they really tailor these groups to almost every age group in the community and over the years they have seen a concrete impact of how it has impacted students and being pretend information a different hands on context.

So what we can learn from that is that a museum, as we probably all know, is a very successful classroom, or it can be a very successful classroom and it is one that evolves and adapts hopefully to what a community needs and in this case in Stafford it's adapting to the year in which the school children are and what they are learning at that time in school and how the trust can facilitate that and using the castle as a starting point.

What happens when you explore? What happens to you as a museum visitor? What happens to the museum? What does it mean? Through the

programme, they experienced a combination of new places and new people and new opportunities. They reflected on themselves and their place in the community and then what they can do and none of the people on that project had actually visited a museum before. They had the perception that the museum is not for them, which is really a shame, because a museum should be for everyone. Initially, this group visited the Greenfield Valley Museum and the Heritage Park for half a day over an eight-week period. The first week really focused on the visitor experience and people just feeling comfortable and relaxed in the museum environment. After that, they started participating in the museum's activities, such as in heritage activities like rug making or helping in the garden as well.

So, at the end of this eight-week period -- remember, it is just eight weeks, half a day a week -- the group have really enjoyed themselves so much. It was about being active, just to walk around, no agenda, just walking around and exploring the exhibition, but also to give and being positive about what you're doing, to learn and to connect.

So then, quickly because I'm running out of time, who is the museum for? I've talked about two examples of the museum as a physical space and how they're used to draw in new audiences. What I think is really important is that we talk about how the museum is relevant at all times, because it is very important for the museum to adapt and evolve but it is also important that we think about the core of what a museum is and that a museum still displays stories and histories.

I think it is important we talk about permanent exhibitions as well. For that, I just want to give a quick example from Scotland where five cultural trusts worked on the permanent display for a new venue they were opening. They did it for two years, working with 400 volunteers. They really focused on telling the story of Dunfermline, the town they're in, and telling the story of the people themselves. They actually opened their exhibition with the title *We Made It*. It is really referring to the stories of local people that are being told in the exhibition, using, for example, audio recordings from coal miners and mill workers, but also looking at the high level of interaction within the exhibition and using different ways of displaying objects but also inviting people to leave a written response.

I realise it is easier to talk about making a museum more representative of the community when you actually open a new venue, but I think it was important for me to mention that because there are important lessons to learn from Fife [?]. Through this community engagement programme, it meant that local residents took ownership of the museum and its collections because it is their stories being shared and their perspectives and it is really

powerful, too.

Finally, the final point is on how the museum develops and moving forward and ensuring they're relevant for their communities. It can be done, as the picture behind me shows. This is from Renfrewshire. They are using advisory panels. They represent different members of the community and different stakeholders and key audiences. This photo shows the junior panel, they provide advice and guidance on designing a museum from a child's perspective. I want to say thank you for listening to me and hearing a brief introduction on what charitable trusts are. I hope it is inspiring by looking at all of these different aspects. I will give the floor back to my colleagues from Cynon Valley Museum.

[Applause]

CHARLOTTE: I work for Cynon Valley Museum Trust which is in South Wales. My name is Charlotte. I'm the museum manager there. I've been working there since 2016. You are missing out on a beautiful autumnal photograph captured the other day of the front of the museum. I will keep going!

So, there we are! You get our names twice. This is our museum. We have been there since 2001 as a museum. In 2014, the museum was closed. There we go, I won't touch it again now! In 2014, the museum was closed by the local authority. There were big campaigns locally. There had been a lot of campaigning to get the museum there in the first place by the local community. The lady in this photograph is Gail, she's a local artist and she was one of the sorts of spearheads of the campaign. You can just see a man behind her holding a banner, he is called David and he was the first person I rang after I got the job and he was on my list of people who wanted to volunteer for us.

What I should say is important and interesting about us is that we were not put to Trust, so the Council didn't decide to close the museum and reopen it as a charitable trust or asset transfer everything to a charitable trust. It was closed and plans were under way about how the collection might have been used. I don't know the ins and outs of those but it was just closed. The local community formed the charity that I work for off their own backs. With the council, they secured nearly £100,000 of grant funding to reopen the venue just over two years after it was closed. I think it was just a remarkable achievement and I still can't quite believe that it happened quite a lot of the time! Anyway... so three years later, we are still there. We have a campaign group, £100,000 and a lease and a service level agreement.

So, we are a charity. We're a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which is a fairly new charitable structure. It is kind of halfway in between like a trust and a company limited by guarantee or a charitable company limited by guarantee. It means we have a little bit less risk for our trustees. It is a real benefit for us because it means that I can be a little bit more inventive. Ha-ha! We are responsible for all of the operations of the museum. So, we run the staff team, we look after the volunteers, shop, car and galleries, exhibitions and although Sara, who you will hear from a minute, looks after our collections and she works for the local authority, so there is a bridging of the gap there.

It is quite an interesting setup. We don't have a loan of the collection although there are a number of kinds of different ways it is written or not written into our agreements. So, we have access to the collection via the local authority's heritage service but Sara will tell you a little bit more about that later.

We're a very small team. We have five members of staff which is just over three full-time equivalents. We have 65 volunteers and 36 of those volunteer every single week with us. For an area that is only about 16/17 miles in space, you know, there's quite a lot of people that are engaged. All of our volunteers live quite local. 80% of our trustees live within the area that we represent as well so we really are rooted in the area.

This is the main thing that we have been doing for the last couple of years since we got our funding to reopen, we have been able to secure funding to keep our staff team together for the next -- well, it was three years when we applied for the money, but it is until 2021. We are really keen to be a value-driven organisation and last year we secured these five values as what we like to live by. It is all underpinned by sustainability and I was really glad that you mentioned profit because I think sometimes in the sector it is seen as a dirty word, but charitable trusts can't exist without making money because we don't have statutory funding. It is a reality we have had to get used to. Having a conversation with our community has been really important around that, about the fact that the museum isn't free, although it is still free to come to the museum, but the fact that it doesn't cost nothing to run and they don't pay for it via their taxes anymore is quite a complicated thing to talk about.

Yeah, so I only had three minutes! There's lots that I haven't been able to mention. Hopefully, you will be able to see when Will speaks later about how we really capture our values in what we do and we try to kinds of underpin everything with a desire from our immediate residents. I'm going to hand over to Sara now who is the operational manager for the council's Heritage Service. She doesn't work for us but she looks after everything

that is on display in our museum. Thank you.

SARA: Thank you, Charlotte. So, I work for the Local Authority Heritage Service. It is a good news story! So, the relationship between the local authority and the trust is underpinned by a service level agreement and that formalises the relationship relating to the operation of the Cynon Valley Museum. Essentially, the Trust are responsible for everything operationally and the Heritage Service kind of own and manage the collections.

Now, I started working for the local authority actually just before Charlotte was employed by the Trust. We were both new into our roles, we were challenged to forge a new working relationship and figure out the nuances of the SLA to establish the relationship between the Trust and the Heritage Service. One of the main challenges of the SLA for us is that it didn't actually come with any specific commitment of my time for the collections. It broadly says we will support the Trust activities and provide advice and guidance. In reality though, it is far more of a two-way dialogue and sometimes a bit of trial and error. This was particularly evident with new donations to the collection. The Trust cannot acquire its own collections. Front of house volunteers are the first point of contact for donations. In the beginning prospective donors were given my contact information and told that the Trust couldn't collect anything. It was confusing for people and we couldn't be sure that everyone would then contact me. A decision flow chart, you see a bit of it on the screen, was developed to help volunteers make decisions about what we were to take. However, some people lacked the confidence to communicate our acquisition policy. Ultimately, it is really hard to say no to people!

We went back to basics and developed a simple form, which you can see there on the screen, for donors to complete. We felt that donors were more comfortable to ask people to complete the enquiry form because it gave them something tangible and explained what we do. It was passed on to our collections volunteers who collect information on historical context and considers the offer against our acquisition policy and either accepts or declines the donation.

So, the Trust and I are very keen even though on paper there are areas of the museum that are the Trust's and some that are still the local authorities. There are no locked doors, so all of the Trust's volunteers are offered basic collections training. It enables them to get hands-on with the collection. It familiarises them with our stores, use our collections management system, and improves collections knowledge across all of the volunteers. So that means that they can kind of better support the museum activities and that includes using the museum collections in educational workshops and temporary exhibitions.

We actively encourage dialogue around collections, engage our volunteers to undertake their own research and we have a case that I think Will is going to touch upon, coordinated by our volunteers, they tell us what they want to see displayed.

Over the past two, three years, our volunteers have redisplayed 70% of the museum cases, that's part of our permanent museum gallery which is really exciting. So while brainstorming for this presentation it became clear that our success at the start was actually helped by the fact that none of the Heritage Service staff, or the Trust employees were involved in the politics of closing the museum and this meant there was no ill feeling there between us and that made it easy for us to draw a line under everything that came before and kind of move forward together. And also set that example for our communities, as well. We are all ultimately working towards the same thing, building a successful, sustainable, relevant museum for our community.

Through working together, we're making our collections useful for our communities, so we've been able to make more collections available online, adding content to people's collections Wales and we've supported the creation of temporary exhibitions and working together to administer loans from The National Museum; uncover hidden histories, or archive for the Jewish History Association of South Wales and looking how to develop our collections going forward to make sure we can continue to collect what is relevant to our communities in a way that is sustainable for us. And actually now I'm going to hand over to William who will talk about sustainable operation. [Applause].

WILLIAM: So our museum is called Cynon Valley Museum and I'm more responsible for the daily operational side working with the volunteers but different internal income streams and volunteer programme. And what has been apparent throughout this presentation is that we're saved and run by the community, for the community, and over time, as we've developed in this three-year period of funding we're becoming increasingly defined by the community and funded by them.

We have to generally have a lot more unrestricted income that can be used to make museums sustainable and for me, and the museum, we have the capacity to expand what we're doing but the only way we can do that is by enabling the community to lead on what the museum is for and allowing the community to define who the museum is for and what it's used for in the future. This allows us to do more than what we would have dreamed of if the museum decided they would be leading on every single project, it allows me to work with a wide range of people from different parts of the

community, understanding what they want and listening and spending time to listen and developing what the community needs and what we need to offer. And for us it has allowed us to become a canvas for the community and allowed us for people in the community to come and use the museum to convey their own identities, through working with the museum.

We had built relationships, it takes time starting with maybe just like a room hire for a coffee morning just as Project Unity did, who are a LGBT+ community group. They came to us to hold a monthly coffee afternoon and over the last year we've developed our relation with them, they've built up confidence using the museum for what they need it for, they've chosen our museum because we can offer a safe and secure environment and we've developed that. We've worked with them, working with their networks to do more, so for example for transgender awareness week last year, we worked with them to develop an event around that day, we put up information across the museum and we held a talk about transgender awareness.

This brought in a whole new audience to the museum, an audience the museum had not previously engaged with and we've continued building up this relationship so it's not just a one-off event. For example, this image above you is from LGBT history month and we worked with them, they have networks which the museum didn't have and they were able to contact speakers to come in and give a talk for the LGBT history month and what that did is we came in and we advertised extensively using our social media to reach out to our audience and then reaching out to their own audiences and we put on the events.

That showed us that this partnership was successful, when they came in they didn't ask permission to do this, they did that intensively, and this is what we want, the community it take ownership of the building and to define it and to show their identify through it.

And we see this across the museum, we have different events on throughout the year and we've been a venue for steam punk fair and we have yoga twice a week, we have a playgroup and we do a lot of work with local charities, we're working to tackle mental health and social isolation and groups supporting people back into work so we're becoming a venue for what other people need us for and that's what is key to the future of the museum, broadening who the museum is for, making it more relevant and useful. People can come to the history and arts, but many people are finding barriers to get to the museum in the first place.

And by creating these different reasons, communities is enabling themselves to come to the museum for different reasons and then they are

through the door and then they can engage with the history and art and breaking down those barriers which have been presented in the past. And the impact for the museum has been huge.

We've seen a 600% increase in reuse over just one year and a 400% increase in income for room hire, this is fundamental to the museum's long-term sustainability. We would not survive without the community funding us and groups such as Project Unity such as the play groups and yoga, all of them coming together and supporting the museum is at the moment funding about 20% of the income we need to stay open, post our funding in 2021. We are building on that and building on relationships, doing more with the groups and identifying potential opportunities to collaborate and enabling groups to do more and enabling the museum to do more.

It's a self-sufficient cycle of partnerships which is allowing communities to lead on all this work. And for us it's making the museum more relevant. We're doing more, we're doing more different things, we're not saying "no" to people, we're saying yes we will support you and do what we can, to develop this and see what we can do. And it's still coming on and changing every single week.

For example, this week, tomorrow we have an arthritis support group in the museum which we've advertised on social media and we've gone to local social media groups to tie it and bringing it together and linking it with the yoga and at the end of this week we are working with Cynon Valley pals, our group supporting families with children for example with autism or Asperger's and they're helping us launch the lanyard at the museum.

And then we have worked with them for over a year doing different events, putting on as a room hire and working with art projects with them and now with the lanyard scheme helping us become more visible to people with hidden disabilities. The event is intended to be a landmark event with businesses invited, local groups invited to find out how they can make the community more accessible to people with hidden disabilities.

But there is still so much to do and there's a lot of different ways we can embed community engagement within the museum programme.

The first one is in our volunteer programme. We started broadening our approaches to volunteering, working with the local CVC interlink and with the Job Centre supporting people who are looking to develop their skill sets, perhaps retail, or someone identified as being in social isolation, the museum can offer support back into society and back into work. We're looking to expand our community engagement with collections with a programme we're calling Cynon adult and it's about supporting volunteers

to engage with the collection and redisplay it. Allowing the community to curate their own heritage rather than museum staff. We can support communities to research what they're interested in and support them and expand and provide training to get them there.

And then, finally, our community focus exhibition programme. We have two temporary art galleries and over the last year we've made it increasingly clear to artists that they have to be doing more with community, it cannot be an installation and then just leave it for four weeks. There has to be a programme of engagement throughout the exhibition, we will support them, the gallery space is there for that time as they support us to do these events throughout the museum. So that's our side of the museum. Thank you for listening to us. [Applause].

>>: Okay, thank you. So we'll have prepared some questions that we would like to discuss in the panel discussion but I'm also conscious of time so I wanted to open it up first to you guys, if you have any questions about any of the work that Cynon Valley Museum is doing or if you want us to go ahead with the panel discussion we can do that and if you have a question just raise your hand and I'll direct it to you.

Okay, great. So, the first question then, for all of you: what do you think the museum's role should be within the communities because we have talked a lot about how we change our programming, how we change the exhibition. So just very quickly what should be the museum's role? Anyone?

WILLIAM: I think it's about the museum's role is to be defined by the community, I think it's about being relevant and useful to the community its within, understanding what the community needs from the museum is just as important as what is already there. And I think it's about being flexible and really being there as a canvas for the community to define what they want.

>>: I would agree with that. We did talk to people in Warrington about Warrington Museum and Art Gallery and what they wanted that to be and resoundingly, the feedback was, it's a place to tell Warrington's history and stories and for us for proud and to talk about Warrington's people, ultimately providing that town with a fantastic resource about their local history that does support the stuff going on in curriculum through schools and so on.

So a bit similar so the example you gave about Fyffe and their approach telling the town's stories that's what we see, and talk to people about the

purpose of Warrington museum. But also using the spaces within the museum to shout loudly and proudly about today's talent, so today's emergent artists coming out of Warrington and giving them the chance to showcase the talent that they have as well.

>>: Thank you, and I think we talked a bit about funding today and about making a profit, not making a profit. And as we know and you touched on this Charlotte, many Trusts don't receive statutory income, Trusts could receive a management fee from their authority to manage the museum as well but generally there isn't a lot of funding available. So how do you balance your role in the community actually creating a sustainable and mixed source of income?

SHARON: That has been a real challenge for us. And we do get quite a small management fee but I will say that's very hard to negotiate and is probably spent more time, we've probably not made a profit on that management fee, after we've negotiated it with the local authority. We don't make a profit anyway, we make a surplus income. So it has been difficult and I did touch upon it around, we couldn't introduce, we didn't want to introduce an admission fee.

But it has been difficult to communicate that there is a cost associated and, like I said when I was speaking, that is no longer covered through council tax, it's quite a difficult mindset.

But actually the hardest relationship has been with other local organisations rather than our visitors so we get quite a lot of other smaller groups who might be publishing a book, for example, they want to sell it in the shop and they want all of the proceeds from that to go to their charity.

We have had quite a few rows I think, Will, or heated conversations with other charities about how it doesn't cost us nothing to sell that book. And that there has to be some sort of financial relationship there. But we kind of see that as part of our role in terms of changing behaviours and altering mindsets and things around the fact that nothing is free. And it's like Will was saying around the programming that we asked artists to do, that can be in lieu of the small fee that we ask for exhibiting groups, so even though nothing is free, we don't just take money as a payment. We're not there yet.

>> It's been an ongoing challenge I suppose for all charitable organisations, certainly the fee has decreased and we hope to reduce it as close to zero over the coming years. We think more commercially, it is one of our gifts as a stand-alone organisation. The other thing that I think -- it's already been mentioned today and we don't do enough of it

in Warrington -- is around people letting know about that charitable status, and a similar conversation to yourself, really, but it shouldn't be -- it is nothing to be ashamed of. It doesn't mean that because it is a third sector deliverer, it is lower quality because actually that's absolutely not the case. But I think there is something in people understanding that, certainly for us, yes, we work in partnership with the local authority but we are not them. Certainly in our time as a stand-alone Trust, we have seen a number of instances of philanthropic giving, of legacy donations that we know just through speaking to the family of the donator would never have been left had the services still been delivered by the local authority, rightly or wrongly, there is an attitude and a stigma with that, so I do think there are definitely financial benefits to that charitable status but it is about making sure that people understand that. It is free to you at the point of access but not free for us to deliver and this is how you can help us and actually anything we do make goes into diversifying that programme and taking a risk on a higher quality performance or something different. It might not everybody's cup of tea but it does broaden the diversity of the offer and bring new opportunities, I suppose, to the borough.

>> Thank you. I'm conscious of time. If there are any questions from the audience for of any of our panel members, let me know. There is one final question, but then we're running out of time. We touched on this in your responses already, the difference between a Trust managing a museum and maybe the local authority still delivering it in-house. I was wondering whether you could just comment quite quickly on what some of the unique aspects are. We covered a lot of them already but maybe we can just summarise what are the unique aspects of a charitable trust managing a local community museum compared to maybe the local authority or just another museum provider.

>>: I think something we have learnt, we work in very close partnership with the Heritage Service but we also work with another local museum run by the town council in that area, and in that sort of three-sided partnership, we are each able to deliver things differently to each other. So, having the machine of a local authority behind you it can be really useful when it comes to HR and pensions because they give me a headache, let's face it, but also, I can be slightly less risk averse than a local authority in the way I operate.

I can be more efficient in spending our money. We are opposite a Tesco's. The café, when it was run by the council, couldn't go to Tesco's and buy bread if they ran out because of procurement. We can be more efficient with our ways of working. We can take more risks.

>> Yes.

>> I would agree with all of that! Certainly, for me the partnership and working in partnership has been an interesting journey, so I've worked for a Trust for the last seven years and for a local authority before that. I noticed the number and type and breadth of partners that again are probably more willing to come to the table and have a conversation with the Trust than they are perhaps with the local authority, again rightly or wrongly, it has overwhelmed me the last seven years. Almost being a little bit arm's length and not-for-profit status almost opened up a whole new world of potential partners to share resources, to share expertise, to bid jointly for grant funding opportunities, so all of that. But, for me, definitely one of the unique things is the number of partners that are willing to come forward and have a chat.

>> Great. Thank you very much. Thank you for joining our session today. If there are any questions, please feel free welcome to contact us after. We will give the space to the next session now. Thank you.

[Applause]

CAMPAIGNING FOR WOMEN IN MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE SPACE INVADERS

Melissa Strauss, Babs Guthrie, Sara Wajid & Polly Richards

SARA: Good afternoon, everyone. We were having a little chat there. I forgot you were there and we need to get started. Welcome. Thank you for choosing this of all of the competitive and exciting session you could go to. We were told it was sold out, so three quarters of you have obviously slunk off, having thought they were feminists in the morning, have come to decide they're not feeling so feminist and maybe they've gone shopping or gone to see one of the exhibitions!

We can have some chat with you all. It is good to see you all. I see many familiar faces and a couple of people I don't know astoundingly. I'm Sara. I'm part of the Space Invaders crew. We are a bunch of self-appointed feminist leaders in this sector and I'm just going to give a very quick hello and welcome to the session. I will hand over to my sister in solidarity over there, Mel Strauss. This session is an opportunity for us to not only vent and hand wring, much as us museum workers love to do that, it is an

opportunity to do some work.

Our campaigning activities over these last few years have been pretty focused on solutions and on making change in the sector. We all have plenty of opportunities I hope to vent in the course of our own professional lives. The museum sector is more than half female, so it is not that we're under represented, our issues are really about leadership, about feminism and about making change and increasingly we should be feeling we're in positions to make change so this session is really about thinking about what we're actually going to do.

First, Melissa Strauss will give you some background on the work we've been doing, on the campaign and the things we have learnt and the research that is coming out of the campaign. Then, we're going to do some talking amongst ourselves about blocks and barriers and how we're going to overcome those blocks and barriers and then bring those kinds of conversations back into the room and think about collectively think about the solutions and air some of those ideas and then finish up with a tried and tested conference favourite, a pledge, to finish the session. So, Melissa is currently a Clore Fellow. I've known Melissa for the last four or five years, since we first met through a collective women leadership programme that we were put on and I think I can best sum her up by saying she's the brains of our outfit! That's a policy worker by profession and she's the brains of our campaign. That's enough from me, over to Melissa.

MELISSA: I will use this one. My name is Melissa. I'm part of Space Invaders. There's a few of us here today so besides me and Sara, we have also got Polly and Babs up in the back there, so you might see them in a little while. I'm just going to talk briefly about who we are, what we're doing and why. Then it will be over to you to talk a bit about some of the barriers to gender equality and what actions you can take, as Sara said.

Space Invaders is a campaign for change for women in museums and heritage. We're claiming equal space for women, equal space in terms of power and influence, equal pay and fair conditions, and equal space in terms of the stories told.

This is a nice picture of us all in Birmingham. I should explain what that is. So, there are a lot of pressing issues at the moment, not least around climate change and increasing poverty. So why should we focus on this? I think that to myself sometimes and then every time I think about this, there is some news that reminds me that there are some very alarming experiences for women and girls out there. Recent headlines have told us that domestic violence killings have gone up, and that rape convictions have gone down, that two thirds of young women have been sexually

harassed in public, and that women and girls are actually missing school or work because of anxiety about the way they look. This all sits within a context of broader gender inequality, around power and pay, around health and care giving, around education and stereotyping and the way we raise our children, and issues in the representation of women and girls, so for example, in the media as well as in our museums.

These issues are all connected and it has even been shown that misogyny and climate change go hand in hand. This inequality also exists in our workplaces, and it plays out in what we do or what we create for our audiences, too.

I'm just going to share a few stats about our sector. So, women make up just under a third of the National Museum Directors Council, despite being a huge proportion of the staff within our organisations. 39% of board members at national portfolio museums are women. Although I hear it is actually going down. Not many chairs are women.

Reporting on the gender pay gap shows that women in the sector are still paid less on average than men. A huge 40% of respondents to an English Heritage survey thought women had less of an impact on history.

Only 17% of Wikipedia biographies are of women. 2.7% of statues are female, not counting monarchs or mythical characters. A statue of Millicent Fawcett, unveiled only last year, is the first statue of a woman in Parliament Square, that's one out of 12. There's only one statue of a black woman, Mary Seacole, erected in 2016.

So, we have run a number of events over the last few years. We started out with a conference, a Space Invaders conference in early 2016. Overall, we've drawn hundreds of women together over the last few years to talk about the change that you want to see.

These concerns and ideas that have come out through these events have fallen around three rough areas, which we've brought together to draft a manifesto.

This sets out our demands for equality. So, one, equal power. We want to see leadership in museums and heritage reflect the wider population. With women and a diversity of women, too, holding their share of influence.

This is about boards and the top roles in our institutions, but it's also about how we encourage different, more inclusive leadership styles and more shared decision-making as well.

Secondly, fair conditions. We want to see workplaces and conditions designed to meet the needs of women, this includes no pay gap, flexibility and support for caring responsibilities, and safe spaces free of sexism.

Finally, our stories told. We want to see women represented equally in collections, narratives and displays. This includes women's history and art and designed by women, but it could also include the wider issues of interest to women and how they're explored in our spaces.

So, what are we doing? We'll be properly launching the manifesto in February, after a lot of discussion around it and getting people's input as well. But we're already taking action with help from a lot of other people.

We're bringing people together, so, as I said, we've been running a few events mostly in London but we'll be supporting a Space Invaders event in Birmingham soon on 15th November and we're also talking to women around the UK about organising their own event and how we can help with that.

We've been supporting research focused on women leaders, this came out of our initial conference. I'll talk a bit more about that in a minute. We think that it is not just about having more women in the top jobs; but also, about the style of leadership. So, we're recording podcasts with feminist leaders, including directors, but also activists who are directly addressing the lack of women's history on display.

Knowledge and data can also help us influence change. So, we're also working on a survey on workplace conditions and experiences for all women in the sector, which we hope to be putting out soon.

So, about the research I just mentioned, this is research on gender in the museum sector and it's being undertaken by Siobhan McGuirk and Nirmal Puwar, who are based at Goldsmith's University of London. This is one of six projects called The Global Grace Project: It is about global gender and cultures of equality which is funded by Research Councils UK. So far, they've completed interviews, a survey and half-day discussion forums. So, they've basically done the research and they're currently analysing the results to share with us all next year. The research asked three sorts of broad questions. How does gender operate in the workplace, particularly where most staff are women but senior roles are dominated by men? How do ideas about museums shape what is seen as good leadership? And finally, what does it take for some women to reach "the top"?

The researchers looked at women's experiences in relation to a number of areas, these can be defined around external factors such as maternity leave

and funding cuts, circulating and changing ideas, so for example, about accepted leadership practices and expectations about how women should behave. Internal initiatives such as networks and endorsements and individual conditions like financial independence, caring responsibilities, health, class, race and status.

Currently our work has focused mainly on leadership and conditions so those first two elements of our manifesto. However, there is a lot of amazing work that is already happening more broadly to address the lack of women's representation in history and on the museum walls. So, the East End Women's Museum which I'm actually a volunteer at will become a physical museum in 2021. They're just completing a big initial consultation which has gathered the views of over a thousand people, so a lot of love behind that project. The Vagina Museum has just opened. Rosie's Plaques have been out there plaquing in Norwich, and are inspiring other women in other parts of the country to create their own plaques where women's stories are missing. We have our activist Barbie who is highlighting women's absence from our museums and public history, too. For example, here she is at the National Gallery in London where female artists make up less than one per cent of its collections. Out of 2,300 works, that's not very many. It is great to see this range of work for women's equality in museums and heritage that has emerged over the last few years, and I'm sure that with more of us involved we can make the rate of change rocket! Yes!

That's all I've got to say. I will pass over to Sara.

SARA: I would just add to that, that a little maybe a little more background and context about how our Space Invaders group came together because could any of you just give me a show of hands, whether you had heard of Space Invaders before? Or the Women Leaders Network? Have you been to previous sessions? Actually most of you perhaps know, do you want this spiel or not? Does anybody not know where we emerged from? Okay, that's enough. I think I will tell you.

So, basically, the Women Museum Leaders Network has been running for about 15 years and that was a group of the most senior and most powerful women in the sector who had come together about 15 years ago, who had found themselves being the only women in the boardroom and looking for solidarity with other women in the same situation, pretty much for individual professional support.

They formed an invite-only cluster of about, I think there was about 40 to 50 of them and over the course of about 10 years they really supported each other and had this particular kind of very sort of secret but magical,

powerful circle which they go on these residentials once a year to 5-star hotels somewhere fabulous and secrete themselves away and vent and have fabulous drinks and food and empower each other.

And over the course of this ten years they came to realise that this had been amazing for their own careers but there were systemic issues in the sector that their cosy Free Masons club for women wasn't helping so it was time to pass on some of the learning and they got some money from the cultural leadership fund to start a new fund for a hundred women around the country to mimic the model they had in this clusters of five groups of about 20 around the country. And Melissa and I were in those groups along with Sharon Heal and Andrea Cunningham and we realised that not everybody was necessarily interested in smashing the patriarchy in our group but we were so we wanted to find the other like minded avowed feminists and thinking more systemically about these issues so quickly we convinced the rest of our group we should spend a little pot of money on running a conference to find those other people and have more impact on the sector structurally.

So that's how we came to the Space Invaders model and we found the academic that we mentioned and it was her book that inspired our future work so we are a radical cell that has emerged from a more broader equalities group so I thought I would give you that to give you a sense of how we got here.

Having said all of that, one of the really amazing allies that we found through that process was Adele Patrick and the People's Glasgow Women's Library and couple of you have been to the workshop at the museum of London, it was the equalities in progress framework which is an amazing document and piece of work which is research which gives you an intersectional feminist framework for organisational change in the museum and heritage sector and that is an explicitly feminist doctrine and we've read and object absorbed and fold a lot of that thinking.

So the two key questions that Rachel, the main author of that report brought to our last workshop, was around blockers. And thinking, very pragmatically, about where in your organisation you have experienced blocks when you are actually trying to do work. For a lot of people it wasn't exclusively around a feminist agenda but change making in the organisation, whether on a personal level, fighting your own battles, bullies or micro aggressions or simply around or whether it was systemic institutional things about change and bringing feminist practices and inclusive leadership into the organisation and just making our organisations more democratic and on the ground, she said, often people second guess themselves and will start saying, it's me, I'm not being effective enough or

it's this or that thing and they are not calling out the fact that someone is blocking them and actively getting in their way because we internalise so much our own frustrations that we don't, we self silence and self centre to the point we don't identify our enemies and they've got a very thrillingly liberating kind of culture at the Glasgow Women's Library that talks about this as battle explicitly.

Talking about the blockers is very liberating so these questions, who or what is blocking you and what mechanisms are they using and what can you do about it are, are three very killer questions, they're quite simple but when you start getting into them you find it unleashes a lot of meaningful stories and meaningful kind of experiences.

So what I would like you to do now is to twist around in your seats a little bit so we're look for clusters of about five or six so if you are sitting like a lone wolf with nobody around you please sidle up to people and organise yourself into clusters, ideally where you are turning around a little bit if you can. So you can have kind of a circle. Make yourself into clusters of five or six with people that you can either turn around to or snuggle up with. Make a circle as best you can.

And I would like you to start by talking about -- and you can nominate a facilitator amongst yourselves if you want, a chair, someone to keep a bit of order -- and I would like you to think about where you work right now, who is blocking you? And I recommend you just go around in your groups, literally like one-by-one in your circle and focus on your nemesis. And talk about them, for the next ten minutes: who is your blocker? And what mechanisms are they using to block you. Who is blocking you and how are they doing it?

SARA: Once you start it's hard to stop but I'm going to draw your focus now you've got into heated and interesting conversations I'm going to ask you to stop that and listen, as we feed back some of the thoughts for those who are comfortable feeding them back and we picked on Laura Humphries at the back. And then we'll go round and hear from some more of you.

FLOOR: There were some really interesting conversations over here.

FLOOR: I'm Louise and I, actually, full disclosure, I've already been to a Space Invaders session and actually as part of that I identified there was a block and that block was that I was the person in my team constantly being asked to do admin. Send out meeting requests, do this agenda, do these notes, do this a that. And I raised it with my line manager and actually he was really responsive and mortified because he hadn't realised at all. And I have raised that with him and as part of that, the admin is spread more

fairly out in the team and it's a small thing but it actually made quite a big impact on my day to day work and how valued I felt being asked to do all these tasks that could be done by any of the three people so it made quite a big difference.

FLOOR: Can I ask, was there a conversation about that having been a gendered labour.

FLOOR: That is the terms in which I presented it to him, yes.

>>: That's really interesting, thank you. I'll just move along to the next group and hear a bit from you guys. Shout out to Jane Samuels in our original network group thing.

FLOOR: Lovely to see you. So I was at the British Museum for many years and I'm now at the Natural History Museum and actually we had a bit of a chat and I am not sure what the key points of our conversation was, it was a lovely conversation but we didn't pinpoint any particular points but maybe we can go through some of the discussions and one of the things we were talking about, should we settle for low salaries? And there was a conversation around that, and I think the general consensus is, no, the UK doesn't value sufficiently the cultural sector and subsequently we are surviving off lower salaries and that's potentially ostensibly across the board but impacts on women great more than men. So that's one thing that we discussed. Another thing that was flagged up is the fact that it isn't just obviously, a statement of the obvious here, men that oppress women, it's also women that oppress women and that's something that perhaps needs unpicking. Anything else that my group? No, those are the two key points.

SARA: Just a couple more minutes for this section. Would anybody else like to volunteer some blocking behaviours? Or name names. Rebecca?

FLOOR: I wanted to raise the fact it's not necessarily within your own institution that blocking can happen. I very recently had an experience with a male member of or a male who is really a community leader, a gatekeeper within communities in Birmingham, who has recently has been blocking me in relation to a project that we are trying to move forward on. And we're yet to work out exactly how to handle it, to be honest with.

SARA: And in the organisation, have you raised it with colleagues?

FLOOR: Yes. I have had support within the organisation but it's just I think it hasn't been, it's still to be effectively managed at the moment.

SARA: Thank you. This side of the room. One more blocking behaviour? Any kind of different flavour of blockage?

FLOOR: I certainly heard people talking about trustees a little bit.

SARA: We could do some passage of the microphone down the row?

FLOOR: Thank you. I want to say it's interesting to me as a freelance museum curator so I'm not within an institution but I work with lots of different institutions and it has sometimes been the case, I feel like want you as person and you feel tokenised and instrumentalised and that's a main blockage as a queer feminist activist and wanting to express things with anger and a desire for change and I have had some issues with men and different people, and also women, want be to water down that message into something that's more palatable and less political and I think that's something that's really important to bear in mind, that I think so many women also feel tokenised and instrumentalised in that way and that's also a form of violence and blockage.

SARA: Thank you those were all useful and rich examples so now we already had an example from the top of the room about how to tackle those blocker as what techniques and tactics we can use to pushback on them.

Some of them alluded to the tactics, you were talking about a passive aggressive type of tactic of watering things down and not confronting and conflicting and blocking in a very active way, but in a sort of modulating and a compromising and a call for pragmatism and a call for compromise and all of those weedy behaviours.

So thinking about the tactics that they have used, your blockers have used, I'd like you to talk about tactics that you can use to overcome those blocks and tactics that you have used successfully or you are thinking of using or that you could just share amongst yourselves in your groups and invite from our people tactics they think you should use for the blockers that you've got.

If we can spend five or seven minutes on that and then we will come back to the room. To give you an example, some of the things I have used sometimes is those statistics we were talking about is sometimes when I find those statistics about my own organisation, I share them quite widely and freely amongst the senior managers but also on Twitter or elsewhere so that we can open up that discussion and have a bit of transparency about that and say hmm, actually, we're not doing so well in this league table. If you want to talk about benchmarking, here are the figures, not even necessarily saying this is the solution but just saying, "Do you even know

this stuff? Is this even in the uppermost minds in the conversation? Has this surfaced? Is that information surfaced?" I find data and sharing of data and being like a journalist in your own organisation can be a tactic that is quite useful. That's one I have given you for free to start your conversations. Back in five or seven minutes. (...)

>> Polly and Babs, can you give us some examples of some tactics. It requires the rest of you to listen to their tactics! Come on guys, listen to the tactics. Tactics being shared. Thank you.

>> The tactic that I used when I asked my boss for more training and for more projects to be involved in, I kept asking and reminded them that I was here and this is what I wanted to do and it related to my job role which helped me progress.

>> And did you frame that as a kind of -- was there a feminist agenda behind that? Was it an issue around gender equality?

>> It was framed around my own professional development and me wanting to move up and forward. I have seen other people in my department moving on, while I was feeling a bit stuck.

>> So, persistence.

>> Yes.

>> Just keep bashing away?

>> Uh-huh.

>> A good one. Any more tactics from that particular group?

>> We mainly just had ideas about how to make yourself stronger, that was unfortunately the other idea we had, how to make yourself more resilient in this area.

>> And how might you do that?

>> We talked about solidarity. We talked about trying to come to things like this to talk about similar sort of things and try to see a way through, try and get different kind of language so you're not so challenging, because I think if I were to confront my blockers directly I think I would harm my career. So, how do I start those conversations without it becoming somewhere where there is major resistance?

>> Thank you. Could you pass it down to this group?

>> We weren't talking about this in particular. Sorry, guys. A tactic I have employed quite recently is that pestering tactic, but then what you secondly said about damaging your career, I think that there's a really fine balance there, and I don't know if I really reached it. Recently, I was trying to get a pay rise because someone on my level, their job had come up and it was about £10,000 more than I was being paid and I said that is not acceptable. But I had to bring that up in every single one-to-one for about six months before anything happened. Something did happen, it was a very small gesture that happened but I was told after that that's the end of the conversation and if you continue to bring this up, then, you know, you're going to get a reputation, so you need to stop it. I genuinely didn't know what to do with that. You know, we were talking a bit in the group about training, about more courses like the Clore Leadership courses that could maybe equip you better in that kind of situation. Talking openly in places like this is helpful. It is that balance between trying to do something about those blockers but also, you know, as you say, not damaging your career; that term that you used is, I don't know, very difficult. That's probably a male and a female thing but for me in my lived experience it feels like a female thing.

>> Thank you. Is there a group further up here at all that would like to give us something?

>> Hi. Yeah, I guess in terms of actual mechanisms and what we can do about it, we were having a conversation that it's difficult to have those conversations. I've recently dealt with quite a tonne of toxic masculinity from someone who is technically -- I hate this word -- subordinate to me who has tried to undermine me from the ground up. I feel that it almost feeds into that idea of the kinds of #MeToo movement in the sense that you are this emotional female, feeds into the idea that the patriarchy is developed over many years and we are the emotional female and we can't just take the hassle that you deal with and you should just deal with it, like a man. Therefore, should women be in the workplace? It feeds into that and it is almost self-perpetuating and if you stand up and say this is not acceptable and you, well, he's always been lovely to me doesn't mean he's not an a***hole. Oh, no, it's on the board... oh, no.

CAPTIONER: Sorry!

>> It is all that idea of how do you go about -- say lots -- say lots so it moves up! It is how you challenge that without it becoming and almost feeding into the very thing that you are challenging.

>> Brilliant. These are such short sessions and there is so much energy in the room around this conversation and we have to be a bit brutal, unfortunately. Is there any one last tactic over here or over there? Yes.

>> Yes. So, we were just talking about creative element and parenthood and the challenges and that indisputably being a mother impacts your ability to evolve as a professional. We were talking about culture change, NOT just institutional culture change but actually national culture change and changing the law basically, and culture change within an institution as well. But those are obviously quite big concepts and big ideas.

>> Can I just add one tactic? I don't know if anyone here has been in the situation of needing to get union advice, but it is actually, it can be brilliant, and you would never have to tell your institution that you've got union advice, so if you want advice on your legal position they can be amazing behind the scenes. I was in a complicated situation which I'm not going to go into, but the union gave me advice to send a couple of emails and it was brilliant because it was later something that proved very important with what subsequently transpired. So, if you're not in a union, I really recommend joining. If you are in a union, use it because for, like, different work situations they often have expertise and they will have the experience to kind of let you talk through how different situations might play out, so I just put that out there for people.

>> Yes, I think it is a really important point, Claire. That HR departments and organisations are built and designed to protect themselves essentially and protect and further their own interests not the individual workers' interests, that's structurally how organisations and businesses work. You have to think that the union is effectively your HR department in a HR department that is gunning for you and they have expertise around equality issues and gender discrimination, as your HR department will have about the hacks and twists that can happen within the institution. So yeah, I can't second that strongly enough.

As we are starting to wrap up now, I will give you a few key things which is equality and progress is absolutely crucial...

Equality and progress, if you want to sign up for the newsletters, the Space Invaders newsletters, if you are not already, you can find us on Twitter and you can find a way of signing up for the newsletter. You can get the Equality in Progress report on Google, too. We would like you to pledge. On the way out, there's a big piece of paper, if you could write your pledge on that, we keep all of these Post It notes, we don't just stick them in the bin and forget about them. Melissa will explain in a second. That pledge should really be what you can do tomorrow, so there are so many long-term

issues, it is such a short of incremental change in all of that, but pledges will help you focus on what you will do tomorrow on this action. Jot it down and stick it on the way out. If you want do an event like this or like the one that is happening in Birmingham, we have a got a kit or a pack that you can use to run your own sessions, wherever you work or wherever you are. I really recommend that. We have created these resources from different sessions that we have run and it is quite empowering to do this in your own workplace, even if it is just with five people. You might find out that you create a women leaders' network or a staff network within your organisation. Whatever it is, once you start talking powerful things can happen. Melissa, do you want to add anything? About what happens with all of this?

MELISSA: As we were saying before, we have run quite a few events now and people have written all sorts of things on Post It notes, pledges, thing they want us to know, ideas for change, both individual or collective, and I have been dutifully writing them all up. When we launch the manifesto, we will share them with people, what ideas they have and what they want to tell us. You can put anything else that you would like us to hear today or know today. I think that's it.

SARA: Thank you very much. Thank you for your time. Cheers.

[Applause]

MUSEUM REMIX

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE MUSEUMS

Dr Hannah Price, Jasmine Brady & Lucian Stephenson

HANNAH: Hello, we happy few. I think we'll just give it another couple of minutes as there's a Titanic queue for tea and then we'll get started.

HANNAH: Hello, good afternoon everyone, my name is Hannah and I'm here with two friends today.

JASMINE: I'm Jasmine Brady and I work at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

LUCIAN: I'm Lucian Stephenson.

HANNAH: Thanks. So we're here to talk to you today about Museum Remix which is a workshop format that we have developed over the past two years at the University of Cambridge Museums which, for brevity's sake, I'll call the UCM which is an acronym we choose advisedly over the other options available.

So Cambridge Museums ask a consortium of eight museums and the Botanic Garden and our collections are across the arts and sciences and originally gathered together for the scholars within the University.

But before I go further I'm going to ask you a question: what do you imagine when you imagine the University of Cambridge? Is it something like this? Possibly something like this? Lots of you are museum people, I hope, otherwise why are you here?

So it's just possible you might think of this, which is the Fitzwilliam Museum, our largest and grandest museum or something a bit like this. This is Charles Darwin's insect collection at the Museum of Zoology. Now it's also just possible some of you will be students or staff there, so you might think of this. Or let's be honest, there was a slide here, punchline, "slide of the drunk students" but you are going to have to imagine it.

If you are a Cambridge local your experience is something a bit more like this, so it's a big old locked door with "private" sign or, this is an even more special version, the College is closed to visitors and there's a man with a funny a hat there telling you you're not allowed to go in.

So Cambridge is actually one of the most unequal cities in the country. On the one hand, there's the University of Cambridge, the University and the porter probably tips his hat to them. If they find doors locked they know how to get them unlocked; on the other hand there is the vibrant city and the wider region, always playing a bit of catch-up, it's not quite benefiting from the wealth that the university.

Life expectancy for men, this is a shocking statistic, is 10 years less in the poorest area of our city, compared to the wealthiest. So as the University of Cambridge Museum we can play a key role, we are the part of the university where the doors open and together with the Botanic Garden we welcome over a million visitors a year and our learning teams see on average a thousand students a week, they're very tired. And we're committed to providing access to the widest possible audience, we have a huge range of targeted programmes.

However, and this however will be familiar to many if not all of you. So our collections, those amazing objects that tell us centuries of scholarship and discovery, artistic and technology will certainly have darker stories to tell, too. Stories of exploitation, colonialism, systematic power ... and inclusion and inclusivity, it's exclusivity around who gets to generate knowledge, who gets to learn, who gets it tell their story.

Many of our older galleries are pitched at a more academic audience, they're in historic buildings with steep staircases and above all, they privilege the academic voice and academic expertise above all others.

So we have a problem here, and it's not one that's unique to the UC firstly, it's faced by much of the sector by it's cuts especially acutely for us because we've had 810 years to get used to this and that solicitorship is one of the things that making the majority of our curators, those have power over the discourse in our spaces are also university academics but we need to ensure other voices are equally amplified. And that's a bit of a challenge. And it's not that our academic colleagues don't understand, it's not that they don't want to change or that they don't recognise the urgency, but as we'll be familiar to many of you, opening up the collections to our communities is something that generally falls to the engagement and learning teams, am I seeing some nods out there? It doesn't necessarily follow through into curatorial departments. And that means that those of us working and learning on public engagement are pushing back always at a way of thinking and a way of telling stories that's very particular to our academic environment. We're talking about pushing back against 810 years of tradition. But equally we're part of that academic environment, too, and so we need to recognise that we are not the best interpreters of our collections for all audiences and we need to recognise and acknowledge that and ask for help from outside.

So with all that, what I'm about to say won't sound very radical but for us in Cambridge it really, really was. So in June 2018 we worked with three members of Museum Detox, does everyone know what Museum Detox is? No? So it's a network for BAME heritage and museum professionals, and they helped us develop a new workshop format which we called Museum Remix because they are really cool.

We invited 20 contributors from across the museum sector including members of our staff in non-collections roles to spend time in three of our museums and challenge us to make change. So the aims of the event were simple: firstly to be honest, and own up about the challenges that we face; to bring fresh eyes and perspectives onto the collections and to encourage participating museums to make change. We really didn't want it to be a

talking shop but a way to galvanise action and I'm calling it a workshop but that doesn't really capture what it was. It was sort of part-workshop, part-mystery shop, part-intense team building exercise and part-conference.

We worked with consultant Sonia Dyer to develop a format to encourage free discussion and empower them to critique our collections and divided the group into three teams, one for each participating museum and Sonia and fellow detoxes each led a team throughout the workshop.

So each of the collections, so The Fitzwilliam Museum which is our big Museum of Art and Antiquities, the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, Earth Science and Geology and the Museum of Classical Archaeology which is our tiniest museum and is mainly a collection of plastercasts. Each of them is a different size and they present a distinct challenge in terms of scale, history, subject matter.

And so over the course of two days, each team spent time in their allocated museum, they are explored the galleries, discussed the collections with museum staff and came together to reflect on their findings. And after some thought provoking and intense discussions as a team they then presented their findings to a gathering of UCM staff in the Museum of Classical Archaeology.

We only gave them one rule and that was that the team should be as creative and provocative and challenging as they I wish and their findings cut across a huge spectrum of barriers from unspoken colonial legacies, racism, sexism, physical and intellectual access and the inclusive academic voice which came up over and over again and I won't go into too much detail here about their findings which you can find on our blog if you go to our website, you can read all about it. But I'll just give you some quotes so you have a flavour of the discussion.

So this was on The Fitzwilliam Museum.

This is on the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences Geology Collection, mainly men I saw there, I felt it was very masculine and a certain class and exclusivity.

So it was really an exercise in giving up control and when we offered the Remixers the stage to day two we had no idea what they would say or how we would react. Rightly or wrongly, and I think the jury is out, we didn't offer the museums a right of reply at that session.

The lecture theatre became an emotionally charged space. We had asked the teams to take on the emotional labour of sifting through challenging material, negotiating conversations between each other now they are all

mainly totally strangers to each other and also with museum staff and we asked them to present a miniature conference which I can tell you is pretty scary so we had asked them to do that and critique the museums.

So we didn't give the museums a right to reply because we wanted to give the teams freedom to speak without repercussion. And for our colleagues, that meant it was a real exercise in listening, and accepting critique about collections that you love and are really invested in.

And it was super-intense and here we really benefited from Museum Detox's guidance because they challenged us to embrace that discomfort. There's a reason why they're called hard truths, change is hard and taking responsibility for our challenges is hard and so this quote captures the mood of the afternoon where she said, when something excites and feels radical, question, is it really? Or is it just radically comfortable?

And the freedom made that experience meaningful for the Remixers and this was something that they flagged up time and again in their feedback. It was great to be given freedom to be honest, usually it's difficult to say critical things and I worry about the personal and professional consequences, this felt very freeing.

So what happened in the result? Well, the Remix shifted the tone of the thinking around representation and diversity within the museums towards a sense of urgency and active action. And in feedback, staff talked of being jolted out of complacency while the Remixers themselves felt empowered to take further action. One of them went on with two fellow PhD researchers to launch untold history tours at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology which is one of our consortiums museums.

And the shift in atmosphere really galvanised support for new collection LGBT+ tour programme. Feedback from the Remixers was really quite astonishing and to be honest I have never received so many hugs from basic strangers as I did after that conference.

Fantastic to meet fellow change makers and it was incredible that they were now identifying themselves as active change makers, it was a jaw-dropping, new-thinking experience. So we knew we wanted to do it again but there was some learning to take from the pilot. How could we ensure we were not just preaching to the choir?

There were 70 attendees as our mini conference which sounds cool but the nature of the event meant those 70 were mainly already interested. And as I've tried to introduce above, who we really needed to reach out to was our academic and curatorial staff. Those who currently hold the power over

the discourse in the collections and encourage them to recognise the validity of alternative kinds of knowledge.

So to get them into the room we needed something more tantalising. We needed something that fit more easily into museum ways of thinking. So that was bubbling way away in the backs of our minds. We wanted to think how we could further empower the Remixers we didn't set a type focus because we were interested in inequalities of all kinds.

However, because the Remixers were not able to brief themselves in advance there was still an uneven power dynamic between them and museum staff because they were coming in without prior knowledge of the collections and the museum staff in a way imprinted their anxieties on them and we wanted them to come in with a feeling of confidence. We wanted to provide explicit skills development opportunities so it was more obvious exchange rather than inviting people in and then getting them to share their thoughts and sending them off without an explicit offering back, that didn't seem right. So that was something we wanted to incorporate.

We also agreed with the feedback that, as exhilarating in some ways the frankness of that presentation format was, it was ephemeral so if you were not in the room, we had not captured it, that was that, you missed it. So we needed to ensure that we captured the thinking process. So we needed a tighter focus to concentrate minds and a format so we decided to do an exhibition in two days.

But I'm getting ahead of myself so we'll just reel back a little bit to spring 2018. Another member of Museum Detox and LGBT+ champion Dan Vough enters our story. So at the end he was leading the V&As volunteer LGBT tour programme and he was visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum and issued a Twitter challenge for his colleagues at the Polar Museum. My colleagues who would then take part in the workshop I invited Dan back to the UCM and commissioned him to develop proposal for LGBT+ tours. Basically, if the academics weren't going to do their research we needed quickly enough, we just decided to outflank them.

Dan uncovered untold stories, enabling some volunteers to tell their stories in the gallery for the first time. They shaped the look of the marketing of the programme and chose its name, Bridging Binaries. Bridging, Cambridge, yeah! Here's our amazing team! I think if you look closely you might see a little Jasmine in there. No, you're not there! Oh, dear. So, Dan's work then gave us the body of knowledge we needed for Remix 2. Our task this year is to think about the Bridging Binaries tour content could be incorporated into the galleries, with the ultimate ambition that on any day, any person who identified as LGBTQ+ could rock up to one of our

museums and see themselves represented. Again, our particular context makes this work especially urgent. Although Cambridge is a tolerant place, it is a bit of an island in the middle of East Anglia, which has the lowest proportion of out LGBT+ folks in the country. The Bridging Binaries tour highlighted the power of representation. So, this is a quote where the participant says: "For those who identify as LGBT, it makes them more welcome in museum spaces. For those that don't, it is an opportunity to expand thinking, particularly in regards to how discrimination and exclusion can lead to faulty or inaccurate research."

Meanwhile the university was finally starting to pay attention. We had a new vice-chancellor, an international press coverage for Bridging Binaries meant that suddenly things were starting to move. We received funding from a new university diversity fund to deliver Remix 2, along with support from Arts Council England allowed us to broaden the scope of what we were able to achieve. So, I'm going to stop talking soon and hand over.

I will just say that Museum Remix two took place over a month ago and it is actually really fresh in our minds still. Our planning for this workshop really placed interpretation at its heart. We work with Jasmine and the Bridging Binaries team to put a spin on the original format and deliver a pop-up exhibition at the end of two days. So, this was a complete experiment. Nobody had done this in Cambridge before and question had no idea if it was going to work. Even so, learning from last year we committed to documenting the whole thing exhaustively as well as the final exhibition so there are going to be lots more photos now to look at. This year, five museums took part. The team remix, students and volunteers and non-collections staff. So, each team was led by a Bridging Binaries guide. They delivered their LGBTQ+ tour, discussed aspects of their tour they felt needed to be explored further in the objects' interpretation. They spent time discuss the collection with museum staff. There they are in the Museum of Zoology. A very pensive curator in the museum of archaeology and anthropology. They headed back to the Fitzwilliam Museum to work on new labels for two of the museum's objects. In order to make the display visually exciting as well offering a creative way for the teams to remix and reinterpret the collection, each team was also challenged to make a stand in object for the original. The museum's artists were on hand to facilitate and magic materials from their stores. Here you can see two figures in action making their display. So the teams as last year had two days to deliver this which meant it was a strange mixture of art attack, time team and the apprentice and we installed the display at 3.30 on the second day and welcomed eighty friends, colleagues and family members to a private view an hour and a half later. So, there they are in the studio and here, if this works, you can see this video. Nothing's happening. No-one's in the box. You're going to have to imagine this is a time lapse.

You can see we start with some cardboard plinths and suddenly it all goes a bit mad and we have an exhibition! So just picture that in your minds!

Now, I'm going to hand over to Lucian and Jasmine to will tell you more about their experience of the process.

JASMINE: Thank you. So, as you can see this is us with our final project. For me, this project started about a year ago when I came on board with the Bridging Binaries tour as a volunteer. We started off with the tour that Dan had written for all the four museums that took part which was actually a really incredible piece of work. I believe there are about ten to fifteen objects in each of the museums and already having been working at the Fitzwilliam Museum that was where I chose to focus my tour. Since then, it has -- I think I have to say it has snowballed it has become larger than it began a year ago, when it was a little less planned and kind of dedicated to specific parts of the collection, working in the museum simultaneously to being a volunteer has led me to uncover a lot more kind of relevant information about the objects we are talking about. So, a story that I think is kind of relevant to what we've done here and has sort of been my journey of discovery from a year ago to this point is you can see in the background here there is a shiny gold frame with two medieval monks standing in the middle. Now, these are fully operational cardboard puppets made by myself and Lucian. Oh, so based on this original painting, this is the original painting by Edmund Dulac. He was a good friend of these two men, this is Charles Rickets and Charles Shannon, for those of you at the British Museum these names may be slightly familiar, they bequeathed a lot of their collection to the Fitzwilliam Museum but also the other half to the British Museum. They lived as a couple and created a lot of work together and collaborated in pretty much everything they did, produced some really amazing illustrations and texts but also collected a really incredible collection of antiquities and manuscripts and wood block prints and other tiny little objects and paintings. If you have a look into their catalogues you will find in both our museums that there is an absolute wealth of material.

So, after Charles Shannon's death, who died six years after Charles Rickets, their collection was given to the Fitzwilliam Museum and to the British Museum. The Fitzwilliam Museum put it on display and wrote underneath it, "The collection of Charles Shannon" because he was the one who had died most recently. I was working with our library that has a lot of manuscripts and letters from previous directors and when I came across a letter from Thomas Stourge Moore who had written to the Britain museum's director who said, "I notice you have not written Charles Rickets' name on these labels." His letter essentially said that it was a testament to their relationship and to the love they had for each other and the

collection that both of their names should be inscribed on each of the labels in the museum's collection where their work was displayed. So, that was 1937. We're almost a hundred years on and that hasn't quite happened entirely. So, I thought that this would be a very good time to bring back that letter and Lucian and I created this piece to go along with it, as it were. And possibly... this will work but I'm not sure. Okay. This is actually oh, look.

>> The bequest to the Fitzwilliam Museum was in both their wills. Shannon would have been very distressed if he could have foreseen that Rickets' name would not appear equally with his name. He recognised that informing the collection and, in the decision, to leave so large a part to Cambridge, his friend had always been the leader. Their friendship, like their collection, was unique and they regarded its designation by their joint names as their monument. Surely no consideration for legal technicalities out to be allowed to frustrate their certain wish in the matter of these inscriptions? Their fellowship and this benefaction to the Fitzwilliam Museum may even come to be forgotten if an accident is allowed to counter with a misleading iteration, the dearest wish of both of them. Yours sincerely Thomas Stourge Moore. ".

>> 25th October 1937. Dear sir, thank you for your letter. I quite agree with what you say that Rickets Name should be included with that of Shannon in the latter splendid bequest to this museum. I had the matter already in mind and hope to do something shortly about it but having only just taken over you can quite understand I have much to do but will attend to the matter before long. Yours kindly, Louis Clarke.

JASMINE: There we go. That was the letter as read by Lucian and I, along with a piece of puppetry, I suppose, that we had created to go alongside it. So, I think that explains a little bit about why we are doing these stories and the effects that have come out of it which I think is a lot more of a depth of curatorial interest and involvement from other members of staff who have been incredibly valuable in supporting us and helping us with these projects. I think as soon as something is projected on a large screen to enough people, these things start to happen. So, it's been an incredibly positive move within the Fitzwilliam Museum and we have seen some brilliant results coming out of it and being part of the remix was an incredibly rewarding process. Thank you. [Applause]

LUCIAN: Hello, I'm Lucian. Hopefully I'll be audible this time. Oh, good. So, I work at the faculty of education but I've been an illustrator for a large amount of my adult life and a lot of my interests revolve around storytelling through performance and through visuals and what sort of stories get told and how we interact with them and absorb them and how we identify with

them.

I was incredibly excited to see the call for applications for Ricks Museum Remix two. I couldn't apply quickly enough. I could feel my own mother in my head saying, "Write a serious application." But I remember writing in my application, "In a previous life, I was a medieval court jester and I will do this in your museum." So, they accepted me! That's clearly what they wanted.

So, I didn't really know what to expect from Museum Remix, we had been given literature to read about it and absorb it but I didn't do that... because of who I fundamentally am as a person!

I was very excited to get put on to the Fitzwilliam Museum team and be taken around to Jasmine's tour of her selection of three objects.

While I was listening to Jasmine talking about Shannon and Rickets collection and the plate of Queen Anne, which we also looked at. Here she is and she stands alone, as you can see. Her husband is nowhere to be seen, but also neither is her lover Shari'a church Hill, nor her later lover Abigail Masham. I'm trying so hard not to get distracted by the subtitles. So, I saw these objects and I saw them in this context of a museum that I had been to so many times in my life. A lot of things happened at once in my head. I'll see if I can guide you through them. Firstly, I thought about how eight years ago I came to the Fitzwilliam Museum on the first date with my boyfriend, who, you know, at that point of doing Museum Remix was in Sweden. We were apart from each other and I was pining because I'm pathetic. For our first date, we went to the Fitzwilliam Museum. We had a wonderful time. We looked at the objects that Jasmine had been showing us, talking about Shannon and Rickets who collected it. Neither my nor my boyfriend about who Charles and Charles were. We had no idea what their life was like, what their love was like, and anything at all. We just came into the museum and we went around it and we left none the wiser. The second thing I first thought about was how angry I was at Stephen King because -- this will become relevant in a minute, I promise -- so the day before I had been to see It chapter 2 at the behest of my housemate. And I don't know if you've seen it and spoiler alert I will talk about the beginning of the movie, so I guess it would be a spoiler if you went to see it and the film begins with an incredibly graphic, violent homophobic assault. I thought while I looked at this movie, I thought firstly, I felt very upset, then I missed my boyfriend. And then I felt this intense flood of anger that love of men like me is just reduced to this sort of titillating thing to add some sort of crunchy popcorn kind of texture-mouth feel to a big budget movie and it just me very cross. I thought about Shannon and Rickets and how they loved each other and

I thought about how they had collected their collection together and how I didn't know about that and then I thought about how much I hate Stephen King! Then I thought about how much I miss my boyfriend again. And then I thought you know what I want to do for Museum Remix? I want to bring Charles and Charles back from the dead so they can tell us about how much they loved each other. So, we made puppets! So, that's what we did. It was great. I got very excited about this and I talked about it on the internet and the impact that I saw following that, following my engagement with these two men who hitherto I hadn't been aware was that people really want to know about gays who love each other. They really want to know the positive, happy connections between people they don't just want to see themselves reflected in history and storytelling. They want to know it is going to be all right. They want to see something real that isn't just some sort of as I said before a fantasy that is constructed to make people feel sad or cross and while these are two good and real emotions, we need something more than that and we need something more enriching.

GEORGE: So, I will come to the end of what I was going to say really about that. Plates. Very quickly talk about the plates. Yes, I will tell you about the plates. So, you've seen the favourites, I assume, everyone has seen the favourite? I've seen the favourite, I saw it seven times in the cinema, by the time I came back for the sixth viewing they said, yes, just go in, it's fine.

So we thought about Anne standing alone on her plate and how discreet the edge of the plate was, how smooth, shiny and whole it was, and how it completely, either as a work of art or as a physical object didn't reflect her relationships.

So Jasmine and I, the drawers, made a plate of Anne and Sarah and they are together, their arms are around each other, they touch. Because, you know, there's not enough art of women who love each other where they are physical in romantic and cogent ways. So we drew them embracing and then with the use of a glass cutter and a hammer that I brought from home in a bag that would not have passed the security test here at the British Museum. Smashed them to bits. And then we taped them back together with the special tape which I am told is what they actually used to fix the plates, unless I wilfully misremembered that.

But the tape was all taped back together and hurriedly but, see, behold, she is taped back together not with Sarah who lies at one side but with Abigail! So all the parts are smashed in there, and all these bits everywhere. And meanwhile, at the back, her husband, who is he? We don't know. Do we care? No. But we felt that, out of fairness and representation we should probably put him in there, anyway. So that was

great. That was fun. It was fun drawing in a nice 18th century style. I'm never sure which way round the centuries are, numbers are hard, you know how it is. And it was very nicely received, it was good to do the big old label which I would read out but it's here in front of me.

I like the dryness of the label, the label says it's part of a dinner service, depicting Queen Anne, Sarah Churchill Abigail Masham. Pictured also is Queen Anne's husband, Prince George of Denmark. Brilliant, I was pleased with that, I thought there was a mixture of the physicality of the broken plates and fixing so that was the second object and altogether that made our contribution from the Fitzwilliam Museum. There we go, that's us. There's the two other artists, there's me with no eyebrows on, very cool. And Jasmine. Good. I think that really is all I had to say about our contribution, unless there's other secret things I've forgotten. Thank you. [Applause].

HANNAH: Thank you, guys. So it was just a month ago, and as you can tell, we're still gathering thoughts and I actually have a big box of stuff back at the office to sort through and properly archive. And, as I think Jasmine and Lucian have covered well, it was an intense experience, it was different to the first workshop but it was intense nonetheless and I think a real added bonus of this year is that we have the physical artworks and the label text to really concentrate our minds on what the next steps are.

So, I can report that as far as our short term goals are concerned there is an online version of it on the website which is dropping today but if it doesn't tomorrow. Again, the same link, museums.cam.ac.uk, and a full evaluation report is coming. And we're popping up in the exhibition again so we have three dates in December around Cambridge for staff and also a community event called Millroad Winter Fair and an event later in the year so this constitute isn't sitting in a box. One of the museums is working with their Remix team to display the artwork within the context of their gallery which is hugely exciting.

We also have some digital plans afoot to incorporate the labelled text multimedia labels within the galleries, still early days but we're plotting. And, I guess at this stage, the biggest lesson I can share is when you give up control to incredible artists like these guys, marvellous things happen and you need to be prepared.

So we could never in our wildest dreams have anticipated Rickets and Shannon coming back to life. There was a gleam in Lucian's eye when they pitched the idea that made the workshop work for me but it was completely unanticipated. And actually because we were still in the frame of mind about last year's remix we were sort of thinking very much about written

interpretation and labels, that this was a display that would do a job but was part of a wider process, sort of taking the place of the conference that we had at the first workshop but with cut out and keep material that we could continue to work with.

And initially conceived we were just going to have labels along with the photography there so that's a big high quality photograph of the Queen Anne dish with the label that the team wrote. Because we thought, surely there's a limit to what people can produce in two days and actually, really, one day. But suddenly on the afternoon of day two, there we were in this white gallery installing an incredible exhibition and this is just a sample of the quality of the work. There were tiny -- and a display case conjured out of nowhere to question the process of looking and interrogating an object.

And these were powerful and necessary stories so we had sort of imagined a sixth-form art display, some posters and text but here we are, we produced the first fully co-produced exhibition on queer themes in Cambridge history. And then we were going to take it down again, the next day. And EJ Scott of the Museum of Transology made this point at the Museums Association Conference in October. He said, the problem with pop-ups is they pop down again and this particular pop-up had already begun to pop down when we went back into the room the next day, I like to think because all the glue melted because of the bodies in the room but it was scrabbled together, it was a proper art attack so we packed it up, we have its physical presence there as a commitment to making longer-term change and it really did achieve its aim of getting our directors and curators to think about their collections differently.

One said the whole process has made us view our collections differently but at that moment we had to take it down. It would have been amazing to have it up for longer so that's a big piece of learning for next year, because we're going to do it again. A bit of thinking to do about striking the right balance between creativity and freedom, that freedom to make anything out of anything which is what we gave the teams but also how do we balance that with something that might be more robust enough to take a more extended period of display?

And so I'm really thinking out loud here I guess now. There's one possible solution which is that one of the museums is displaying the objects in the gallery but that's not easy for all. Should we consider going straight to digital? So we can deploy something straight away in the galleries? But I think that loses the magic of the tangible that I think makes all of us museum people.

So we don't know yet and any suggestions you might have gratefully

received on a postcard and I'll just close with a shameless plug.

Bridging Binaries Tours spreading to seven of our collections in January so if you are ever in Cambridge do drop by and thank you for listening. [Applause]. We may have time for a question? She said tentatively. Does anyone have a question? That's fine, you don't have to. We'll be in the foyer.

FLOOR: Just one quick question: can I ask about how you recruited the (inaudible) and then also what attracted the participants? Two-part question.

HANNAH: So we used a process that we had worked on with Museum Detox last year, to work up a call for contributors which we shared mainly on social media but also throughout our local share Museums East which is our local network. We decided to focus it on the county this year, partly because we had people coming from Edinburgh last year and that seemed a little bit unfair, though awesome so we focused it on the county.

We put out a call and went through different LGBT networks as well so our local city network, the encompass network, through our university staff network. And they were a mixture of an absolute mixture of museum folk, students. We had students from Cambridge School of Art, as well. And I don't want to speak for these two, but people highlighted the creative opportunity was really important. Meeting like-minded people came up high and an opportunity to develop their skills. The fact we put that skills development opportunity and they were explicit this year really helped and it was a pretty diverse group but noticeably younger than last year. I don't know if you want to add anything.

LUCIAN: I found the advert for Museums Remix this year through the LGBT staff network University of Cambridge and I responded to it because I had been hungry to do a Bridging Binaries tour last year myself but was unable to do it so the moment something came out involving the words LGBT and museums I was like, give me that! Because I think the storytelling potential of physical objects and physical space with someone who is knowledgeable to prance around them like some sort of jester just spoke to me very deeply. So that's what I did. That's why I wanted to do it.

HANNAH: We have a big time's up sign, so we'll be outside, if you want to come and have a chat. And thank you for your time. [Applause].

LEGACIES OF IMPERIALISM: NEW APPROACHES TO CURATION AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Alexandra Green, Henry Ginsburg Curator for Southeast Asia: *Raffles in Southeast Asia*

Nik Petek-Sargeant, Project Curator: Endangered Material Knowledge Programme - *Collecting, sharing and representing material knowledge from across the globe*

Thomas Kiely, A.G Leventis Curator for Ancient Cyprus - *Meet the locals! Cypriot archaeological agency in a 19th-century 'colonial' context*

NIK: Hello, everyone. My name is Nik. I work for the British Museum, as you can probably see from the slides. During this presentation, what I'll be doing is I'll be highlighting the project I'm currently working on; it's called the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme. I will use this as a case study for how we are managing to represent different communities and give them a voice as museums are taking on new roles. I will point to some of the shortcomings and restrictions we are facing and the concerns we are having.

I will provide a brief background to the talk and the new museum roles. I will present the knowledge programme and how we're working with communities and the things that still need to be resolved.

So, the museum remit is expanding. They are not any more simply institutions that display a past and present products of different cultures, that store and preserve material, culture that consider to have some value and importance in the Western context, mostly to us, and in particular we have moved away from this fetishized ideas that objects are self-contained items that can be extracted from a society, yet still tell us everything about the time, place and culture that made it. The displays at the Pitt Rivers museum are a great example of that idea, and also the British Museum to a great extent. We are becoming more aware of issues of diversity and representation, ethics and handling and displaying of objects, and our messaging as well as object histories and meanings. So, as a result, we're inviting communities into the museum to tell us about our collections, to perform rituals, as you can see on your right, and to help us curate. Already today, I've seen many great examples so Ulster Museum collecting and inviting the LGBT+ community into their institution.

So, the museum remit is growing to include in the collections and curation also intangible heritage and what we might call material knowledge. By that, I mean the cosmologies that objects help to construct, the daily routines and special events that wouldn't be possible without certain items,

objects, architecture, as well as objects that is understood and used in certain social contexts.

We're also more aware than ever of what is our Western value system and that other cultures might not have the same object-centred value system that we have but we still need to include them and represent their ideas.

Just before this session, I was listening to First Sight and Sally Shaw and how that Colchester art gallery, how it did not represent the local African community concept of culture, so the African community there did not relate to that idea of culture.

So, we're now, as museums, keen to collect knowledge that is immaterial but related to objects and make it accessible to the local communities from all across the world and the broader public. The easiest way to do it is through digital technologies and the internet.

The growing remit and new technologies are also bringing with them certain opportunities as well as challenges regarding accessibility, knowledge ownership, and issues like digital colonialism, to just name a few.

So, talking about our programme, the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme is a product of this growing remit of museums.

It is having to deal with some of these issues that I just mentioned.

We launched last year and what we essentially do is we are a grant giving programme that's focused on recording and documenting material practices and knowledge that are in danger of disappearing. Our focus is the made world, so to say, and the knowledge systems around material culture, and the ways of living that material culture enables. We're looking at how something is made, used and mended and in the end also thrown away.

We provide funding for fieldwork all around the globe and the researchers will in return share their documentation, data and all of their recordings with us, which we then upload into an open access repository for everybody to see.

So, since we just launched last year, we have given our grants this year so we have nothing to show as of yet. The researchers and also the community members are currently in the field, so we're expecting material next year.

Our aim is to essentially highlight, preserve and make accessible the global knowledge of endangered activities.

Our intention is not to get and make documentaries, like you see on TV, but to get raw, largely unedited, unstaged recordings and data that can be re-interpreted and be reused continuously. For us, it is important that the recordings have so-called ecological validity, so that people act normally as if there was no recording device in front of them, that they go about their lives.

It is important that each project has community support, that the community is fully engaged, and that researchers have previous established community connections and that they spend enough time there with communities so that these bonds are strong. So, the community becomes an essential stakeholder in the knowledge they give and in the recordings that are created and then given to us.

This combination of technology becoming cheaper, more accessible, the availability of cheap online storage the advancement of digital preservation and the growing connection to the internet both here and all across the globe allows us to include and represent knowledge, unlike ours, in ways that were not possible before and we can privilege different views and value systems and different things that are culturally significant to others.

We can, therefore, more effectively help communities preserve their tangible and intangible heritage. and they can convey to us why something is important or to their future children.

Many communities are happy to share their knowledge, either because their experience a loss of identity or cultural fabric because their children are not picking up these practices for various reasons which can include migration, cultural colonialism, or because they don't have the cultural capital and this is a way for them to get some recognition in the broader world.

So, an interesting project we are funding and that is challenging our Western value system and is putting the community views upfront is a project on simply rope and broom making among the Urhobo people in Nigeria's Niger Delta. While straightforward culture to make and it was probably once abundant, it has only been tangentially recorded in West Africa and both are being replaced by synthetic fibres and other tools. But the ecology of the region is changing which is affecting the availability of these plants and if we take the broom as an example, it plays a far more important role than just cleaning. The sweeping of the broom was supposed to keep misfortune away from the house. If you were a burglar, the broom was supposed to keep you occupied until the residents come back. It was used in medicinal and funeral practices so the broom is not just endangered just due to ecological changes and due to imports, but also through the

changing values that Christianity is bringing. Through the broom, we get to know about the Urhobo tribes. A similarly interesting project is on beekeeping in Kenya's Cherangani Hills. So, beekeeping is dwindling in the area they used to live because they were evicted. Forest conservation is being practised. You can see on your right a destroyed house. Now that the people are excluded from that landscape, the possibility and ability of elders to kind of give their knowledge to the younger generation is being stymied. It is not just about beekeeping but also about the landscape and the connections that are made through this practice.

We're also developing a metadata scheme that tries to record some of the context in which practices and knowledge sharing take place and that tries to account for global cultural variation. So, the museum standards are generally centred on individual objects and are really not suitable for what we're doing and a lot of the ethnographic projects have developed metadata standards that are really just targeted at that one project.

So, we're trying to record with our metadata standards where things are taking place, so is it the kitchen or is it the cattle corral, or a specific ritual place. Who is involved in the practice and what is the relationship between them? If a specific time is important, a specific season, time of day and so on. We're also trying to include the local language as much as possible.

But there are nevertheless significant issues we are encountering as a global programme. So digital colonialism, knowledge presentation, and ownership and sharing and access and the relationship with source communities. As a global programme, we do not have the capacity to build lasting relationships with communities in that sense we are relying as our grantees as middlemen to manage that relationship and to provide us with information, for example, if certain records needs to be restricted. But this middleman relationship has its limits. So as soon as the researcher loses that relationship with the community it is us also losing it. Also, we said we would keep these records indefinitely and that relationship with the researcher cannot last that long.

Moreover, we are the ones that will be distributing that knowledge through our repository system and while legally we won't be owning that, we won't be owning the records, explaining the Western legal system to, for example, an indigenous community in the Malaysian rainforest is enormously difficult task and the clash might possibly happen in the idea of what knowledge is, how it is created and where it might exist.

Which brings me to the point that not all knowledge is the same. And what knowledge is can be perceived quite differently so for example, in some cultures in Papa New Guinea knowledge is not something that can be extracted but is relational from person-to-person. By us creating a digital

record and collection we're moving that relationship and in that sense, we're also compartmentalising by adding metadata to it and is it suitable for the types of knowledges we see around the world.

Access to the records can also be an issue while we stipulate that copies need to be left with local community, do they have access to equipment that can open files, do they have access to the internet? It's a question many communities might not want to be connected, but also they might not care if things are distributed through the internet. But putting something on the internet also means essentially giving control over that knowledge away. And while we're licensing under a CC license, non-commercial, that only gives so much protection and then there are various nuances of who is loud and who is not loud to see that need to be accounted for.

So these factors contribute to the rather all-encompassing term of digital colonialism which is also then strengthened by the underlying infrastructure of the internet and the programmes that we use to build our platform. But also how we compartmentalise in our western thought and thing that knowledge is extractible.

But in the near future we'll need to start asking questions of, are we effective at preserving the knowledge and the context in which it was created? Are we reaching the community? Are we offering it the possibility to do something with the archive we're creating? And, are they doing anything with it? The goal is not just to be useful, but effective. And are we flexible enough to embrace the different ecologies of knowledge?

So these are some of the questions we don't have an answer yet but hopefully very soon. We offer two types of grants, my time is up so you can come and talk to me and if you know anybody who is suitable, our call is currently open so please distribute the information. [Applause]

THOMAS: Hello? Can everyone hear me? Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming to the session. I am the British Museum's curator for Ancient Cyprus and we're privileged to have one of the largest collections of Ancient Cypriot material outside of the island itself.

And it's really formed almost entirely in the second half of the 19th century in the late autumn and in the British early British periods. And it's so very much against the backdrop of not one, but two imperial systems. And when I first started working in the Museum in 2006 I was largely interested in looking at the collection from an archaeological point of view basically studying the artefacts as an academic archaeologist but I soon realised that the history of the collection was extraordinarily important for enhancing not

just the archaeological value of the collection but also what it could contribute to the history of archaeology and, indeed, as I'm going to talk very, very briefly today about the social history of Cyprus in this period.

So I just want to share a few insights about why the history of the collection and the history of Cypriot collection is important and I wanted to suggest a very basic ways we can address the key issues that are very important in museums today and I should stress that this theme of colonialism and race in this session, I could also be in the session on class, gender, community as well. Because we're essentially talking about the whole social background in which archaeology took place in Cyprus in the 19th century.

Just some very basic background. Cyprus became part of the British Empire in 1878 when the administration was transferred from the Ottoman Empire and it remained a sovereign possession and Britain changed the law in line with need and particular prejudices and interests that they brought to the island. Typically, they also spent very little money on the island, they treated Cyprus like all other parts of the British Empire, they expected to be economically self-sufficient and that meant that virtually no imperial money was spent in the development and this includes in archaeology.

Many people doubted the original acquisition by Disraeli on the grounds of economic and political ground but it was very clear that the island would continue to yield archaeological treasures for which it has become famous and, indeed, Cyprus was recognised as being the only part of the classical Greek world to be under British imperial rule and this represented a heady combination of empire and hedonism.

And Charles Newton noted in a review that there was a corner of the Levant, no obstacle to (...) would exist, the corner is the island of Cyprus and he goes on to say even though it has been extensively excavated it was those that created the Museum in New York there was an opportunity for excavation.

George Perrot said that they would lend the assistance to the work of archaeology and help remove the objects discovered and send them without damage to the opulent museum where they would take the place within the sequences already formed.

In this context, it's very easy to look at a photograph like this, it's the 4th February 1891. It's very easy to look at photos like this and see the empire with all the archaeological guns blazing. We see the capital and the crew of the HMS -- which has been excavated five miles away in the ancient city of Salamis and there helped by a many much larger team of at least 40 local workmen. And this particular process is very well documented, thanks

to a report and images preserved in the departments of the Greek and Roman department and this is one area where the British Museum is equipped with archival sources and one of the themes I would like to bring out today is the element to which we need to make more use of these.

Here are a few more images just to re-enforce the idea this was a very imperial act. However it's more complicated. The first large-scale excavations to be carried out by the museum were not by the British Museum but by private speculators, then British academic bodies like the Cyprus Exploration Fund who organised the excavations that led to the discovery of the bull capital and then by the Berlin Museum.

It was in 1893 the British Museum came in fourth place and organised their own excavations and, indeed, the only reason this large bull capital found its way back to the British Museum, and you can see it in our Greek and Roman architecture basement, was because the Cyprus exploration fund went bankrupt excavating the site and gave it to the British Museum in order that the navy collect it.

The government refused to excavate archaeological remains but were happy to collect things that had been given to them and this is one of the ambiguities of so-called imperial archaeology in places like Cyprus which itself was a very ambiguous territory.

I want to cite the work of Maya Jasanoff whose work I'm fond of and she reminds us about Indian and Egyptian objects that many museum collections assumed to be the product of plunder and appropriation owe their -- I'll come back to the concept of individual agency in a moment.

But of course when we also look at this picture, too, I say, can you spot the elephant in the room? Well, the elephant is the local population because of course that three and a half tons of marble bull didn't get to London without local agency. We had 40 workers hired to do the tug of war with the capital. There are images for example of locals, there's a Greek orthodox priest and man dressed in Ottoman clothing, possibly a Muslim priest and an image of a policeman, one of the British Imperial police force and we have two women. It's mostly a very male scene but two women and one of the most extraordinary things on the top left you see a woman wrapped in a car door, this is a mixed Christian/Museum society but the car door is made out plaid or tartan material and it raises all sorts of fascinating questions. Who was she? What was she doing in this predominantly very male scene, what was her perspective on this extraordinary activity?

Overall, we see a mix of the late Ottoman and British period through which

we can begin to think about the background stories of the excavations in which local populations played such an important role. And here is an archaeological plan of that site of Salamis five miles to the west. In 1888 it was described as a hideous chaos of ruin by David Hogarth and it really did require up to 180 workers, men and women, from the local villages to excavate it and then of course the bull had to be moved five miles that way.

And again, we have to return to the realities that it was in fact the local people what did it. We don't just have the written academic account of these excavations, we are lucky that the men on the top also took many photographs of the workers and also many other photographs of village scenes, weddings, celebrations, broadly speaking, ethnographic, but as a result, we can actually begin to think a lot more clearly and in a lot more nuanced way about the role of local populations.

Just got a few quotes here from one writer, useful in thinking about this, this is Zeynep Celiq, she has written extensively about the Ottoman period and her book about antiquities is wonderful and she says basically that a chapter that has been conspicuously from the chapter of archaeology is the landscape of labour, it depended on a large labour force drawn from local populations. And she goes on to say that this is an element that has very rarely featured in accounts of these activities which are usually attributed to individuals, heroic archaeologists, usually white, European and male.

But at the same time she questions one of the seminal works on the role of local populations, this was Quirke's Hidden Hands which of course was Steven Quirke's important work on the workforces used in Egypt in the late 19th century and she point that Quirke's work tends to present a rather monolithic post colonial view of the labour and the relationship between imperial and local and she stresses the nuances of archaeology work from site to site.

This is particularly important in the Ottoman world. There were many different populations and archaeological work was carried out region by region as well. And she says that first-hand accounts of archaeological research always conveyed information on mundane events and human relationships on the excavation of sites. So, in a sense a lot of these basic accounts which are all wrapped up in academic site reports very commonly ignored that. But finally, what I really like about her work she reminds us of the different ways in which we can start communicating these stories. We don't necessarily hear very much about the individual voices of the men and women depicted in these images but we can think of other ways it could actually be literature, it could actually be plays and films, it doesn't

necessarily have to be standard academic biographies. One element is how much people were paid in a period in Cyprus which was beset by economic hardships. These figures were above subsisting tense but still they would have made a huge difference in the economic wellbeing of the villages that benefits from working on these excavations.

On the other end of the scale, we need to understand the asymmetries involved because the white male Europeans who directed many of these excavations were able to travel from London to Lanarka at a cost of £16 a go, that's the equivalent of 300 days' labour for people shifting all of that sand from the ruins of Salamis. On the right we have an expense claim by a predecessor of mine, Alexander Murray. It is important to look in the archives of our museums for all of these ordinary things, not just the big statements of political intent.

And one of the people in those masses that we can identify is a remarkable character called Gregorius Antoniou. We don't actually know his full dates. He was born around 1860, lived until the 1950s as far as we now. He began his career as a casual excavator in the early 1880s. He trained under Max Ohnefalsch-Richter. He then goes on to organise all of the major British excavations on the island, the Cyprus Exploration Fund and then the British Museum. He then opens Evans excavations at Knossos.

He is fascinating because he was the poets turned gamekeeper, he is a knowledgeable person who became an absolute pillar of the British archaeological experience in the eastern Mediterranean. Just to quote the work of Yannis Galanakis, in Cambridge, who has actually looked at this relationship between casual excavation on the one hand and the professional excavator on the other, he says Antoniou was described as a superman amongst foremen.

And one of the obvious solutions we could do here in the museum is acknowledge the people of people like Gregorius Antoniou. Her is our database where we have put our collection information and if you type his name in at the moment you get 16 returns of objects excavated by Gligori, as he was called. In fact, it would run to several thousand if we were to add his name and not "excavated by the British Museum" or "excavated by Munro". We can change how our history is presented and achieve a much greater representation of local individuals.

The final point I will just say is that we should also recognise at the other end of the scale you have significant local agency in terms of politics. On right is a newspaper Neon Ethnos which was arguing over the activities of the British Museum and were they right or were they wrong. What is interesting is we see real local argumentation about should these

excavations be allowed, how much leeway should the British Museum have in exporting this material. Finally, it was local politicians, middle-class politicians in particular in both Muslim and Christian communities that eventually resulted in the archaeological law of the island being changed in 1905, which banned the export of antiquities altogether.

I want to quote the work of a young scholar who wrote on this subject, Polina Nicolaou. "Archives, either held in museums library or universities, are material sites for the excavation of a diverse range of histories." Of course, the action point is putting local people back into the picture, except they've always been in the picture, it is just we have never chosen to reproduce and illustrate a lot of these very untapped archives that exist in our institutions. So, if there are any politicians out there, please give us lots of money! We will do this far more quickly. Thank you. [Applause]

ALEXANDRA: I'm Alexandra Green, I'm the Henry Ginsburg curator for south-east Asia at the British Museum. I currently have an exhibition on in gallery 91. I hope you will be able to go and see it. We have managed to pull out a little bit and explore the motivations behind the curation of his material. What I will be exploring of Raffles' collection in Java and looking at what he collected and why and how he used the information he amassed. Thomas Stafford Raffles' family... in 1805, he travelled to Penang in south-east Asia as an assistant secretary to the governor. Raffles contributed substantially to the East India Company expedition against Java in 1811 and his patron established him as lieutenant governor of the island, a position he held until 1816. So, the British Museum holds more than two thousand objects collected by Raffles. The Javanese collections comprise more than 360 drawings of ancient Buddhist sites, a few small examples in stone, more than 360 shadow puppets, over 130 masks, 44 wooden puppets, and 46 three-dimensional shadow puppets. There are also models and daggers, so all of this material arrived in various tranches. The majority coming in 1859 and another bulk coming in 1939. There are a few other collections at other institutions, the Royal Asiatic Society, for instance, and Claydon House in Buckinghamshire, as well as the Royal Collection Trust and finally the British Library.

So, the conference topic is about issues of representation, authority and power, and in the example of Raffles' collection it primarily relates to class and race.

So what I've done is I've organised the talk around those three themes so starting with the concept of authority, in his publication, the history of Java, Raffles collated as much information as he could about the island, discussing everything from geography, climate, flora and fauna, population and foreign settlers, to history, agricultural, manufacturing the origin of the

people and their character, clothing, commerce, cultural activities, theatre and the contemporary arts, weaponry, language, religion, literature, astrology and antiquities. As you can see, it is quite a substantial compendium. The scale of it resulted in this two-volume work.

Not all of it was written by Raffles. Whole sections are quotes from the reports, journals and observations of other people, sometimes credited and sometimes not. If you were British as opposed to Dutch you had a much more chance of being credited.

So, Raffles' authority as an expert of Java came from this publication. But he also came to be seen as an expert on Java because of his collection that people in London queued to see.

It had been suggested by Nigel Barley and others by collecting large numbers of similar objects Raffles was applying collecting methods of the day to culture material, that's why we have that long list of objects I told you about.

He took care to have these items identified and labelled establishing them in relationship to each other and creating the various sets which are actually not sets, of course, on Javanese terms, so the interest lies for Raffles lay in the fact they were a group rather than his interest in individual objects. So, for example, we see here a mask and it has been labelled in Javanese with the name of the character, and in English with the name of the character and then explaining who that character might be, king or prince and so forth.

By collecting in the latest method of the time, one that was held to be scientific, Raffles added to the authority his collections by extrapolation himself. He was cognisant of this writing in a letter to a cousin in 18134, "I observe what you mention respecting the mentions of attending a literacy work and although I'm fully insensible of my incapacity to appear before the public as an author, I feel some inclination to the undertaking." In my present situation the demands on my time are so heavy that any attempt of the kind would be fruitless. The most I can do is collect materials. In this respect I feel myself tolerably well prepared. I believe there is no no-one possessed of knowing information about Java as myself.

Raffles clearly was very keen to establish himself as an authority and in part he did this by applying very specific contemporary principles. So, turning to the concept of power, so Raffles did not come from the upper echelons of class-conscious Britain and this hampered him politically and socially. So, one of the ways he overcame this was to be the per surveyor of exotica. His collections because of their exotic nature provided access

to levels of society that would not have otherwise. People queued to see his collections, he became a fellow of the Royal Society, and he was able to socialise and interact with many Europeans at the forefront of scientific and global exploration in the early 19th century, for example, Joseph Banks. He was also able to socialise regularly with the Royal Family. He became particularly friendly with princess Charlotte, the Prince Regent's daughter.

So, the reason that the Royal Collection Trust has a number of items from Raffles is because Raffles also used his collections as gifts. So, this is an example of a ritual dagger that is in the Royal Collection. It is a fantastic piece covered with gold and rubies and diamonds. I'm sorry the picture they supplied wasn't brilliant, but it is an absolutely fabulous item. By making gifts of some portions of such collections, Raffles sought to encourage support for himself and his ideas for British trade and colonisation in south-east Asia. In other words, he needed his collections in order to promote himself in a situation where social attainment was strongly related to a person's status. This is a portrait of Raffles and it is on display in the exhibition upstairs. So, here I think we can see very clearly he is demonstrating his power and his authority, first by presenting himself in court dress but he would have received his knighthood in, but also in the background the landscape in the background is actually a scene of Java and he has some of his collections on the table beside him and, of course, as a scholar administrator is also holding papers.

So finally, the issue of representation. In these discussions the Javanese are quite invisible. Raffles was keen to present the people as civilised people by European standards, of course, so that the British could keep the colony and help the Javanese to become very civilised. Of course, in keeping with European ideas at the time Raffles believed that civilisations could be ranked from savage to barbarous and eventually to civilised and that civilisations lower on the scale could be improved with the assistance of those higher up the scale. A society sense of history was viewed as a marker of its level of civilisation as were the possession of writing, stone monuments commercial enterprise and an enlightened form of government following a European model. The assumption, of course, was that European society was the most superior, leading to the view that colonialism was a way to assist others to improve themselves. So, if we return to Raffles' collections you may have noticed it was actually quite diverse. We have this Hindu Buddhist material from the early period of history and then we have theatrical materials from the late 18 and 19th century. So why did Raffles collect such a diverse body of material? So, first of all, the drawings of the Hindu Buddhist stone terms of and sculpture to Raffles indicated Java's early high points, stone monuments were a mark of civilisations to Europeans. And so, they attempted to represent these things accurately,

although they also portrayed them in very picturesque styles and again this to them was very exciting. Java had a glorious past. If you've had a glorious past, you can have a glorious future, of course, with assistance.

But Raffles of course also amassed large quantities of theoretical material and he thought that they, too, represented a high level of civilisation on Java.

So through an accident Raffles connected the theatre with the upper echelons of society. It describes performances as being conspicuous and refined Javanese forms entertainments and noting that the theatre was a sort of interim to the upper classes so the fact that they were participating in it already suggests something positive to Raffles yet additionally many of the products and masks he collected are of high quality. The appearance of many of the theoretical items contributes to Raffles' impression that the theatre was a refined activity and therefore a notable one.

But perhaps most importantly for the concept of civilisation is the fact that he erroneously associated the theatre with national history, an important marker of civilisation to Europeans at the time. He connected different time periods of Javanese history with the different types of theatre, so in his history of Java he has written scenic shadows the subject of the performances taken from the earliest period of history and fable down to the construction of the Hindu empire.

These are distinguished according to the periods of history. The stories that Raffles thought were historical, although they use actual Javanese kingdoms and actual Javanese place names, they are mythological, they bear no relationship to Javanese history and he has also misunderstood the terms.

So again he is pulling together all this information trying to create a complete narrative of Javanese history, which of course was so important to Europeans but he is actually pulling out information and using it erroneously. So Raffles viewed civilisation refinement classism in history as coalescing in Javanese theatre. He did not collect certain items on which he described as comparatively modern invention and not much esteemed.

Collecting objects with a not necessary or important because it's purpose was not to explain Javanese theatre to the Europeans but to represent the state of the civilisation and I want show you a few slides of the theoretical materials. This is a mask and this is a shadow puppet from the mythical story that originated in India and was then adapted in south each Asia.

These are two-dimensional wooden puppets and we have a number of these

and you can see there should have been a rod coming out from the base of the puppet but that has been cut off most likely by the Europeans, Raffles or people who collected them, we're not actually sure. And then Raffles also collected these three-dimensional puppets which don't exist any more on Java so the British Museum has the world's largest collection of these, again, the bottom rods have been cut off and then I think there are few that still remain in the US as well.

Then, of course, he also collected instruments because the theatre was accompanied by music and of course museum was also a marker of civilisation. So Raffles' collections were amasses to him as -- and to present Java as posing a glorious past a contemporary society in doing so he was arguing that the Javanese should have been colonised by the British because by the time he wrote this volume of course Java had been handed back to the Dutch. So he wrote it so arguing that the Javanese should have been colonised by the British. [Applause].

>>: We've run out of time here. You are encouraged to go back to the main lecture theatre. Thank you.

(END)
