



Rethinking
Relationships
Project

MUSEUM ETHNOGRAPHERS GROUP - CONFERENCE 2026

23rd - 24th April
Pitt Rivers Museum

EQUITABLE COLLABORATION:
WHAT IS COLLABORATION
ABLE TO DO OR UNDO?



Museum
Ethnographers
Group

Two days of papers, workshops,
activities and networking across the
Pitt Rivers Museum site.

6pm to 9pm 23rd April

African Community Connections: A
Celebration

South Entrance
Pitt Rivers Museum
South Parks Rd
Oxford



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Welcome

Welcome to the MEG annual conference held here at the Pitt Rivers Museum!

Hosted by the Rethinking Relationships project, this year's conference is a little different to previous iterations. Whilst we still have papers and talks scheduled throughout the conference, we are excited to offer a series of workshops, tours, activities and films to allow delegates to learn, participate and disseminate knowledge in groups.

Important Information

- Workshops require sign-up on the day at the registration desk. This is on a first come, first serve basis.
- Spaces are limited (approx. 7–25 participants unless otherwise stated).
- All paper panels will take place in the Science Lecture Theatre unless otherwise stated.

Rethinking Relationships Project

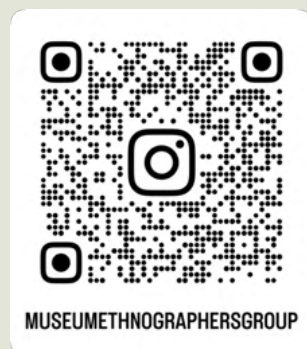
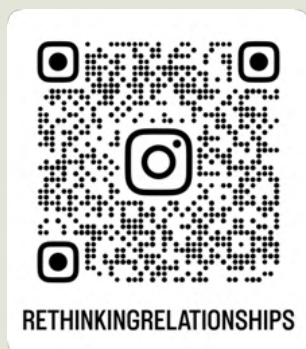
The *Rethinking Relationships* project works across five African countries and four UK museums to develop new museum practice based on equitable collaboration. It is an Arts Council England funded project that began in September 2024 and runs until December 2026. We are working in partnership with members of the African Diaspora and people from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana to explore collections and develop museum practice that better serves their needs.

The project works across four UK museums: the Horniman Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum (University of Oxford), the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (University of Cambridge) and the World Museum in Liverpool. The Museum Ethnographers Group is a partner in the project, and we will be sharing the results of our research through them. Collaboration is at the heart of what we do, and our partners include heritage professionals, community members, researchers, artists, diaspora groups and academics. Our work and outcomes are tailored to the specific contexts of the museums and our partners.

The team is made up of Nicola Stylianou (Project Co-ordinator) and two Relationship Managers, Tom Fearon and Joel Fagan. You can contact us here - RethinkingRelationships@prm.ox.ac.uk

<https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/rethinking-relationships-0>

Please tag us on Instagram throughout the conference and keep the conversations flowing –



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Day 1 - Thursday 23rd April

08:45–09:15

Arrivals and Registration

Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

09:15–09:30

Welcome

Chair: Nicola Stylianou – Rethinking Relationships

Professor Christopher Morton - *Acting Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum and Professor of Museum Anthropology at the University of Oxford*

Beth McDougall - *Families and Communities Officer, Pitt Rivers Museum*

Lecture Theatre, Inorganic Chemistry Building

09:30–11:00

Paper Session 1

Representation and Exhibition: Reframing Museum Narratives

Chair: Tom Fearon – Rethinking Relationships

Museums remain powerful sites for shaping public narratives about history and culture. This panel explores how exhibitions and curatorial practices are being rethought through collaborative approaches and critical engagement with representation.

Temporary Interventions, Permanent Silences: The Representation of Slavery in Contemporary Museums

Fernanda Quadros de Azevedo Costa — University of Lisbon

Alice Nogueira Alves — University of Lisbon

O Vai o Mai? Collaborative Exhibition-Making and the Story of Mai

Eve Haddow — Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Rosanna Raymond — SaVĀge K'lub

Salvador Brown — SaVĀge K'lub

'Añima Ijeda / The Heart of the Community': Co-Creating a Community Museum in San Pedro Huamelula,

Oaxaca, Mexico

Danny Zborover — British Museum

Santiago Valencia Parra — British Museum

Medardo Gutiérrez García — Huamelula Community Museum

Rosalía Méndez Petriz — Huamelula Community Museum

Daniel Espinoza López — Huamelula Community Museum

How Can Large Museum Institutions Engage with Small Arts and Cultural Organisations to Use Creativity and the Arts to Decentre Curatorial Authority?

Francisco Carrasco — Luma Creations

P. Max Alder — Luma Creations

Meghan Backhouse — National Museums Liverpool



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11:00–11:30

Tea Break

Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

11:30–13:00

Workshops & Activities

- Sign up is required on the morning of each day of the conference. Please note there is room for everyone to participate across both days.

Relational Objects: Mapping Emotional Response to Museum Artefacts

Courtney Joseph – Powell Cotton Museum

This creative workshop explores how different forms of context shape emotional responses to museum objects. Participants will encounter objects under varying interpretive conditions and register their responses on a shared “emotion board,” creating a collective visual map of affect. The session foregrounds how meaning is co-produced through creative practice and encounters between objects, memory and interpretation, and opens discussion around care, belonging and the emotional dimensions of museum practice.

Location: Visitor Research Room, Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 15

Re-Archiving Resistance: A Participatory Workshop on Lovedale Press and Visual Counter-Narratives

Sibusiso Mnyanda – Victory of the Word, South Africa (Hybrid)

This interactive, object-based workshop engages participants with facsimiles of Lovedale Press publications and archival images, including material relating to the African Choir (1891). Through collaborative annotation and discussion, participants explore how African intellectuals used print and visual culture to navigate colonial constraints and produce counter-narratives of self-representation. The session connects historical case studies to contemporary questions of access, equity and decolonial archival practice.

Location: Lecture Room, Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 20

Coding and Decoding Gods

Fan Juewei, Willem van Wijk, Jocelyn Jing Wang, Dr. Li Ruikang, Yin Danyang & Tu Fen

This multi-sensory, practice-based workshop examines how gods are materially produced through culturally embedded techniques and symbolic systems. Drawing on deity-making practices from Dali, China, participants engage in hands-on processes such as “filling the interior,” working with materials that act as symbolic organs. The session explores how gestures, materials and tacit rules encode divinity, while inviting reflection on how belief and meaning are constructed in contemporary contexts.

Location: Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 25



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Restitution Study Group and the Benin Kingdom Museum Initiative

Deadria Farmer-Paellmann – Restitution Study Group

This session is a programme of short films curated by Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, Executive Director of the Restitution Study Group.

Location: Lecture Theatre, Inorganic Chemistry Building

Number of participants: -

Museum Tour: Collections Teaching and Research Centre (CTRC)

Joanna Cole and Evie Sproat – Pitt Rivers Museum

Behind-the-scenes tours of the University of Oxford's brand-new Collections Teaching and Research Centre - offering insight into collections storage, conservation practices and research access. Includes collections from the Ashmolean Museum, the History of Science Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Location: CTRC, Reuben College

Number of participants: 10

Networking Space

Tom Fearon – Rethinking Relationships

If by any chance you don't wish to participate in any of the above workshops, we have a dedicated space to allow conference delegates to relax and network amongst other attendees. This can be used to take some time to yourself, let your creative ideas flow or absorb the information from the morning's papers.

Location: Annexe, Museum of Natural History

Number of participants: -

13:00–14:00

Lunch

Life and Mind Building, University of Oxford

14:00–15:00

Museum Ethnographers Group – Annual General Meeting (MEG Members only)

Lecture Theatre, Inorganic Chemistry Building



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15:00–17:00

Paper Session 2

Working Together? Collaboration, Power and Institutional Constraints

Chair: Dr. Ashley Coutu – Pitt Rivers Museum

Museums increasingly emphasise collaboration, yet partnerships are shaped by funding structures, institutional hierarchies and uneven power relations. This panel examines the practical and political realities of collaborative museum work across different contexts.

Collaboration, Disagreement and Conflict Resolution: Examining Jos Museum’s Engagement Strategies and Community Involvement

Adeyi Adeyemi Jonathan — National Museum Jos (Hybrid)

Collaboration Under Constraint: Funding Structures and the Possibilities of Postcolonial Provenance Research

Dr Jan Hüsgen — German Lost Art Foundation

Shadows of the Shades: Counter-archival Silhouettes in Museums

Glynn Alard — Iziko Museums of South Africa & University of the Witwatersrand

Museum Collaboration Can Never Be Equitable: Confronting the Limitations of Good Intentions in Museum Collaboration

Heba Abd el Gawad — Horniman Museum and Gardens

Johanna Zetterström-Sharp — UCL Institute of Archaeology

Day 1 – End



Museum
Ethnographers
Group



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Evening Event

African Community Connections: A Celebration

Pitt Rivers Museum

6pm-9pm

Free but booking required.



Join us at the Pitt Rivers Museum for an evening of music, conversation and shared reflection, celebrating the work we have been doing with African and diaspora partners.

This special public event brings together community collaborators, artists, researchers and museum colleagues for an informal evening in the galleries with a DJ, bar and a range of activities.

There will be participatory object handling and a basket weaving workshop in collaboration with African Families in the UK, live music and a workshop from Bantu Arts. Throughout the evening, a series of short spotlight sessions will take place across the museum to highlight the work our partners have been doing over the last year, including viewing artworks, performances, spoken word, and short talks highlighting participants' experience and specific histories that are held in the museum collections.

Pitt Rivers Museum Rethinking Relationships Project Presents

AFRICAN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: A CELEBRATION

MUSIC WORKSHOPS
DISCUSSIONS
OBJECT HANDLING
OPEN GALLERIES

23rd APRIL
6PM-9PM
FREE ENTRY -
BOOK ONLINE

An evening of music, conversation and shared reflection, celebrating the work we have been doing with African and diaspora partners.

In collaboration with:
African Families in the UK
Bantu Arts
MultakaOxford
Multaka
AFIUK
EKÓMA

South Entrance
Pitt Rivers Museum
South Parks Rd
Oxford

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African Community Connections: A Celebration

Pitt Rivers Museum

Pitt Rivers Museum
23 April 2026 | 6-9pm

An evening of music, making, conversation and community across the museum.

Throughout the Evening
DJ set • Bar • Gallery tours MultakaOxford ملتقى أكسفورد

Drop-in Activities (7:00-8:00pm)

Object Handling (Gallery)
Basket Making (Lecture Theatre)

Bantu Arts Performance & Workshop (7:00pm)

Spotlight Sessions (Gallery)
Short talks, performances and conversations throughout the evening:

Ekóma
Ekóma seeks to curate sincere spaces that preserve heritage and platform descendants while restoring agency. Working towards decolonising and de-centring museums.

Alison Hunte
Artist exploring African diaspora spiritual practices and museum collections.

Lee Codrington (X-Lee Poetry)
Spoken word on migration, identity and social experience.

Jane Gaffa
Diaspora connections to Bunyoro collections and questions of memory and belonging.

Siobhan Williams
Reflections on Ghanaian collections, restitution and interpretation.

Unlock the Chains Collective
Spoken word and performance exploring Black experience.

Rawz
Poetry and multimedia responses to museum collections.

Katrina
Reflections on Igbo community research in Liverpool

8:15 - Music

Multaka EKÓMA AFIUK African Families in the UK CIC LOTTERY FUNDED ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Day 2 - Friday 24th April

08:40–09:00

Arrival

Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

09:00–10:30

Paper Session 3

Location: Lecture Theatre, Inorganic Chemistry Building

Access, Authority and Responsibility in Museum Collections

Chair: Haidam Zeme - Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India & University of Edinburgh

Questions of access, authority and responsibility sit at the centre of contemporary debates around museum collections. These papers explore how institutions negotiate competing claims over objects, histories and knowledge.

'An Arrowhead Can Leave Anytime It Wants': Indigenous Strategies for Object Collaborations

Olly DeHerrera — University of Oxford

Re-encounter and Responsibility: Working Towards Equitable Access and Representation of Shuar Tsantsas in UK Museums

Nicolas Crowe — Wellcome Collection

Sarah Bond – Science Museums Group

Zoë Varley - Wellcome Collection and University of Leeds

Managing Disagreement: Risk, Empire and the Limits of "Multiple Perspectives" at the Imperial War Museums

Sofia Cotrona — Imperial War Museums

Between Access and Exclusion: Digital Platforms and the Tensions of Equitable Collaboration in Brazilian Art Museums

Priscila Maria de Jesus — Federal University of Pernambuco

Sandra de Albuquerque Siebra — Federal University of Pernambuco

Milena Dobreva — University of Strathclyde

10:30–11:00

Tea Break

Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

11:00–13:00

Workshops & Activities

- Sign up is required on the morning of each day of the conference. Please note there is room for everyone to participate across both days.

Performance as Enquiry

Anthony S. Kalume

This performance-based workshop explores embodied and Afro-diasporic practices as methods of museum research and interpretation. Rather than treating objects as static artefacts, the session considers how performance can reactivate collections as relational entities, challenging colonial separations between objects, communities and meaning. Participants engage with performance as a mode of enquiry, foregrounding questions of authority, care, collaboration and ethical practice.

Location: Visitor Research Room, Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 7

Creative Health Lab: Reframing Collections: Creative Health, Disability and Post-Colonial Care

Rachel Fitzpatrick – Ulster University

This participatory creative lab explores how museum collections can be activated through sensory engagement, making practices and collective reflection. Grounded in disability-led and postcolonial approaches, the session centres lived experience and positions participants as co-producers of meaning. Through object encounters and creative response, the workshop examines how care, accessibility and relational methods can reshape institutional practice.

Location: Lecture Room, Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 15

London Indra Jatra Workshop

Ojesh Singh - Pasa Puchah Guthi UK

This workshop explores how Newah ritual practices are mobilised and adapted in diasporic contexts through festivals such as London Indra Jatra. Combining discussion, hands-on activities and collaborative exchange, participants engage with questions of mobility, performativity and community-led heritage. The session considers how museums might work with living traditions that resist static display, foregrounding relational stewardship and cultural continuity.

Location: Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 30



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From Hosting to Allyship: Embedding Ceremony and Protocol in Ethnographic Museums

Marenka Thompson-Odlum – Pitt Rivers Museum

As ethnographic museums see a rise in visits from originating and diaspora communities, the shift from logistical hosting to culturally grounded engagement has become vital. Led by the Pitt Rivers Museum, this participatory roundtable moves beyond administrative access toward a model of institutional allyship. Rather than presenting a finished framework, this session serves as a structured consultation to help shape a sector-facing toolkit. Participants will engage in collective mapping to and are invited to contribute to this practical, adaptable resource. Findings will be shared with the wider MEG network.

Location: Annexe, Museum of Natural History

Number of participants: 20

Museum Tour: Collections Teaching and Research Centre (CTRC)

Joanna Cole and Evie Sproat – Pitt Rivers Museum

Behind-the-scenes tours of the University of Oxford's brand-new Collections Teaching and Research Centre - offering insight into collections storage, conservation practices and research access. Includes collections from the Ashmolean Museum, the History of Science Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Location: CTRC, Reuben College

Number of participants: 10

Museum Tour: Multaka Tour – With these Hands: Crafting a shared Humanity

Multaka Oxford

Join the Multaka team for an exclusive guided tour of Multaka's new display of crafted objects in the Pitt Rivers Museum. The tour will take you on a journey discovering the deeper meanings that crafting can hold for communities around the world, sharing engaging insights into the museum's collection of hand-crafted objects and learning more about the collaborative practices and co-curative processes of developing and creating new displays with Multaka in museums.

Location: Pitt Rivers Museum

Number of participants: 10



13:00–14:00

Lunch

Life and Mind Building, University of Oxford

14:00–15:30

Paper Session 4

Location: Lecture Theatre, Inorganic Chemistry Building

Care, Relationships and the Ethics of Engagement

Chair: Harriet Rose-Barwick & Assiya Kruss - Visual, Material, and Museum Anthropology Course

Collaboration in museums often involves forms of care, emotional labour and relationship-building that remain underacknowledged in institutional structures. This panel reflects on the relational and affective dimensions of museum work.

Before the Door Opens: Relationship Building, Positionality and the Pre-Collaborative Landscape of Bangladeshi Engagement at the Museum of the Home

Neela Khan — The Open University; Museum of the Home

Collaboration, Co-Creation and a Culture of Care

Sarah-Jane Harknett — Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Cultural Repatriation as an Affective Practice

Madalyn Grant — University of Cambridge

Rethinking Relationships: Collaborative Approaches to African Collections in UK Museums

Nicola Stylianou — Rethinking Relationships

15:30–16:00

Tea Break

Old Library, Pitt Rivers Museum

16:00–17:00

Burning Questions

Beth McDougall – Pitt Rivers Museum

Ask the questions and tell the stories you have not yet heard at our conference together. Write your theme or question down in the morning break and we will gather as a group to help you discuss it.

Day 2 – End



Museum
Ethnographers
Group



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