



University of Dundee

University of Dundee Museum Services Annual Report 2020-21

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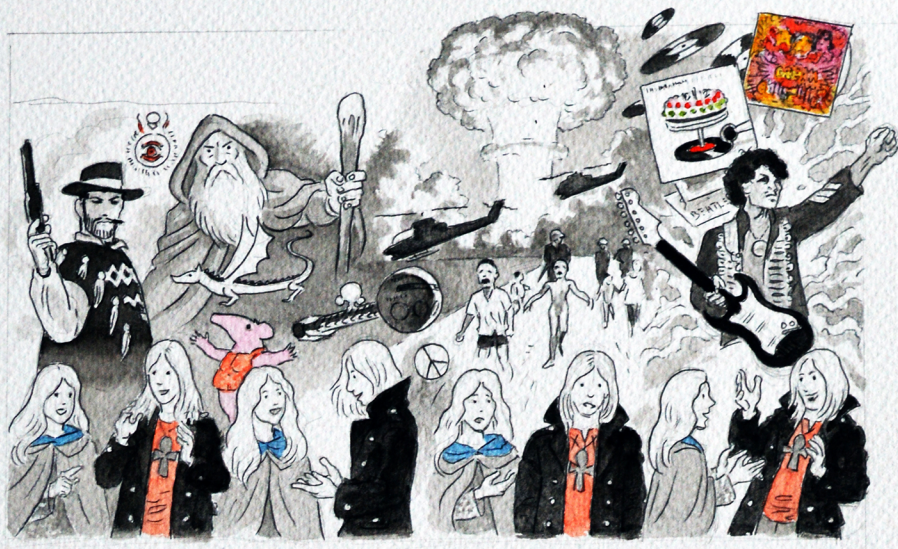
University of Dundee Museum Services

Annual Report 2020-21



University
of Dundee





Introduction

At the risk of stating the obvious, the past year has been unlike any other. Writing the introduction to last year's report twelve months ago, we were all hoping that the worst of the pandemic was over but tragically this proved not to be the case. Our physical spaces have had to remain closed throughout the year, though where safe and possible we have been able to offer visits by appointment to some parts of the collections.

Despite the restrictions, our public activities have continued unabated, with exhibitions taking place online or in other venues and a wide variety of online events and resources. This report describes some of the various things that we've been up to over the past year. Nothing beats the experience of physical engagement with real objects, however, so we hope it will not be much longer before we are able to re-open fully.

In January 2021 we received some very welcome news of a grant from Museums Galleries Scotland's COVID Emergency Fund to create a Museum Engagement Officer post for nine months. The two job-sharing postholders, Hope Busák and Amy Crawford, started in July and in next year's report we should have lots of exciting new initiatives to share with you!

Matthew Jarron
Curator of Museum Services
Culture & Information
University of Dundee

www.dundee.ac.uk/museum



Museum Collections - University of Dundee

@UoD_Museums

Cover image: *Sea Mustelids*, digital artwork by DJCAD alumnus Alex Heywood, 2019



Exhibitions

Our public exhibition programme is normally central to everything we do so to have had our galleries in the Tower closed since March 2020 has had a major impact on the museum service. In October 2020 we mounted an exhibition in the Tower Foyer Gallery to accompany the Being Human Festival but we were only finally able to open this (by pre-booked appointment only) at the end of April 2021.

As an alternative we have continued to create digital exhibitions on Art UK's Curations platform, adding five new ones on a variety of themes. We also collaborated with the School of Life Sciences, the University Archives and DJCAD alumnus James Gemmill on a poster exhibition for Dundee Women's Festival displayed outside the Overgate shopping centre.

Tower Foyer Gallery

Moon Beams (open by appointment from 26/4/2021) – art and natural history with a lunar connection, along with newly created work by DJCAD Illustration students

Dundee Science Centre

Kill or Cure (opened 14/11/2020) – a display using material from the Tayside Medical History Museum

Overgate Shopping Centre

Dundee's Wonder Women of Science (5/3/2021 – 31/3/2021) – a poster exhibition for Dundee Women Festival

3
PHYSICAL &
5 ONLINE
EXHIBITIONS

Online

A Sketch of the Universe - the Artistic Influence of D'Arcy Thompson

15 Highlights from the University of Dundee Museum Collections (chosen by student intern Mattea Gernentz)

The Body

Women at Work: Highlighting Female Artists in the University of Dundee Museum Collections

Dundee - Picturing the City

(all available to view at www.artuk.org)

Loans

With so many venues closed for much of the year, we have had few opportunities to lend material from the collections elsewhere. However, the Scottish Fisheries Museum borrowed several artworks and artefacts from us for an exhibition called *By the Seaside: Heritage, Healing and New Horizons*, running May-August 2021 (shown below). We have also lent a capercaillie specimen to the new permanent display at Dundee Science Centre and a copy of our *Growth and Form* exhibition catalogue featured in a Richard Hamilton exhibition at the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester.





Horse (forefoot)
Equus sp.
Class: Mammalia
Order: Perissodactyla
DUNUC 1976

Indian Rhinoceros
(young calf)
Rhinoceros unicornis
Class: Mammalia
Order: Perissodactyla
DUNUC 2111

Indian Rhinoceros Skull

During British colonial rule in India, big game hunting became a fashionable sport. Rhinos were one of many animals being shot in large numbers for pleasure. By the early 1900s the species was almost extinct. Thanks to international conservation efforts, populations gradually recovered, but habitat loss and illegal poaching for rhino horn means that the species is still vulnerable. Over two thirds of the world's population live in Kaziranga National Park, which was itself a product of Empire, established in 1905.

DUNUC 2111

Permanent Displays

While the D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum has been closed, we've been making some changes to the displays as part of a major decolonising project. Most of D'Arcy's collection was acquired at the height of empire and there is a clear bias towards animals acquired in parts of Africa, India, Australia, Canada and other colonised countries. With help from a postgraduate student from the University of St Andrews we've been researching the hidden stories of racism and exploitation involved in the museum's history. This had led to the addition of new interpretation and several specimens have gone on display for the first time.

**"A wonderful visit - leaving inspired
and would love to return"**
- visitor to the D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum



Collections

During the past year, 332 items were catalogued and added to our museum database, bringing the total number of accessioned items in the collection to 32,828. This includes completing the cataloguing of a large collection of British butterflies gifted in 2019 and on-going accessioning of key works of video art made by students on the pioneering Electronic Imaging course at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in the 1980s and 90s. New acquisitions include a gavel from our Queen's College Dundee days used by the Students' Association; a watercolour by long-serving Art College tutor Leslie P Stuart (above); a series of digital artworks by Animation alumnus Alex Heywood; drawings by sculptor J Keith Donnelly relating to his public art projects in Dundee; and a drawing by acclaimed artist Annie Cattrell made in response to her catching COVID. Additions to our growing comics art collection include work by Will Conrad, Mike Perkins and Bryan Talbot.

In particular, we have been actively aiming to increase the representation in our Art & Design collections by artists of Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds. Thanks to a grant from the National Fund for Acquisitions we purchased a major photographic work by acclaimed photographer and DJCAD alumna Sekai Machache, while the School of Life Sciences funded the acquisition of a set of 18 lasercut prints by Daksha Patel created as the result of an artist's residency in the School in 2018-19. We have also purchased prints and multiples by Ade Adesina, Yinka Shonibare and Alberta Whittle.

We have also been continuing to add to our presence on the Art UK website - having expanded their remit to include fine art photography, we have provided information and images on 126 photographic artworks to add to the site.

Photographing and digitising of objects has been difficult due to COVID restrictions, but we were able to add 1,249 images to our database. In collaboration with DJCAD, the School of Humanities and Archive Services, we were awarded a grant of £241,374 From the AHRC's Capability of Collections programme, which among other things has allowed the purchased of a state-of-the-art overhead camera for high-resolution scanning of our comics art and other works on paper.



Audiences

With in-person events having been impossible throughout the year, our programme shifted towards live online events. These have enabled us to reach substantial global audiences as well as allowing to work in partnership with institutions and individuals around the world. Highlights included:

An online launch event for our *Moon Beams* exhibition highlighting Dundee's connection to the Great Moon Hoax of 1835, with speakers from DJCAD and the School of Humanities

Speaking Volumes – showcasing our artists' book collection with speakers from Dundee, Edinburgh, Chicago and Mumbai

A collaborative event with Tufts University, USA, showcasing an interdisciplinary research project based on D'Arcy Thompson's book *A Glossary of Greek Birds*

An online launch for a new book exploring D'Arcy Thompson's influence in art and architecture, with speakers from UK, USA, Canada and Europe (shown above)

The Nature of Empire – exploring some of the hidden stories of racism and exploitation revealed through our decolonising project in the Zoology Museum

The total live audience for these was 683, with nearly 2,000 more watching the recordings afterwards on YouTube. In addition to these, 144 people also attended online talks by the Curator given for external organisations and community groups, including Dundee Civic Trust and StobFest. The Curator also helped to organise two online study days for the Scottish Society for Art History, a public lecture for Lifelong Learning Dundee and the monthly events programme of the Abertay Historical Society, which collectively had a live audience of 793.

We also continued two video series begun at the start of lockdown in March 2020 – our weekly Curator’s Chat videos (which ran until the end of August) and our virtual public art tours, which concluded in November with one specially created for Dundee’s West End Christmas Fortnight. Further works of video art from our collections were also added to our YouTube channel. Over the course of the year, these various films received over 11,000 views.

Keen to continue with physical activities as well as our online content, we worked with the School of Life Sciences to create a *Dundee Discoveries* map (detail below) providing three self-guided walking tours exploring the history of medical science in the city while also showcasing current research. This was available free at Dundee Science Centre and given out in their family packs for Dundee Science Festival.

“Really excellent talk tonight - I thoroughly enjoyed it... It’s just amazing what cross-disciplinary collaboration can accomplish!”

- attendee of *Glossary of Greek Birds* event

“Brilliant thought-provoking stuff”

“Thanks for organising this eye-opening event, I have learnt so much!”

- attendees of *Nature of Empire* event

683
PEOPLE AT
7
ONLINE
EVENTS



Students

With almost all teaching taking place online this year, much of the unique object-based experience that we offer students was impossible. Where restrictions allowed, students were able to access some parts of the collections individually or in small socially distanced groups. In many other cases, online alternatives were arranged. Overall, we were able to provide direct teaching or collections access for 370 students from eleven undergraduate or postgraduate courses at the University.

Undergraduate

Art & Philosophy
DJCAD General Foundation Course
Environmental Science
Fine Art
Geography
Graphic Design
Illustration
Interior & Environmental Design
Jewellery & Metal Design
Product Design
Psychology

Postgraduate

MFA Arts & Humanities
MSc Medical Art
+ PhD student in Humanities
+ Exploring Practice in Art & Design - DJCAD Upskilling Module
+ Pre-sessional English for International students

370
STUDENTS
FROM
11
COURSES USE THE
COLLECTIONS





New online activities this year included an Object project for Graphic Design students, getting them to research and interpret a variety of items from the collections. Students from both Graphic Design and Illustration worked on projects inspired by the Great Moon Hoax, some of which we were able to incorporate in our *Moon Beams* exhibition in the Tower Foyer Gallery (including the above example by Ella Wright). We were also able to have students visit the Zoology Museum in small groups for various courses including a new Scientific Illustration & Visualisation module at DJCAD. One of the Medical Art postgraduate students also created striking illustrations for our decolonising project in the Zoology Museum.

We also provided five formal work placements for undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Universities of Dundee and St Andrews, plus informal work experience for two other Dundee students or graduates.

The Curator also continued to teach online evening classes in film history for Lifelong Learning Dundee.

Research

Supporting the local and international research community is an important part of our service. During lockdown the number of research requests dropped notably but over the past year the Curator still answered 145 enquiries on such varied topics as whale baleen, flat flies, Junkers Jumo aeroplane engines, nursing at Dundee Royal Infirmary, the history of the Crawford Building, the history of Product Design at the Art College and the artists George Dutch Davidson, Winifred McKenzie and Scott Sutherland. We assisted the artist Will Maclean who is preparing a complete catalogue of his drawings and responded to various initiatives to mark the centenary of the painter Joan Eardley.

39 of these were from University of Dundee staff and students while 106 were external researchers. Due to lockdown and on-going COVID restrictions, in-person research visits to view the collections were only possible for part of the year. 32 visits were made, 30 from within the University and two from external researchers. Notably, a postgraduate student from the University of St Andrews chose to research part of our video art collection for her dissertation.

The creation and dissemination of new knowledge relating to our collections is also an important aim, and in the past year the Curator had a chapter published in a new book, *D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's Generative Influences in Art, Design, and Architecture: From Forces to Forms*, as well as producing a short publication based on our decolonising project in the Zoology Museum.





Partnerships

As a small service we are always keen to work in partnership with other organisations to maximise the impact and effectiveness of what we do. Some of the projects undertaken in the past year were:

Woven Together – We are working in partnership with the Abertay Historical Society and Dundee City Council on a major project to research the history of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in Dundee. Relating to this, the Curator is now a member of the University's Race Equality Charter Self Assessment Team and the City of Dundee Black History Working Group.

Dundee Discoveries and Dundee's Wonder Women of Science – Both of these projects (described under Audiences and Exhibitions) were created in collaboration with the School of Life Sciences and DJCAD alumnus James Gemmill, with contributions from the University Archives and colleagues in several other Schools.

Tayside Museums Forum – Throughout the pandemic, this network has been invaluable in providing online peer support for museums across the region. As secretary, the Curator organised the highly popular Tayside's Treasures online event for the Forum.

UMIS – We continue to support the University Museums in Scotland partnership officer to encourage more collaborative working. One outstanding UMIS project we were involved with this year was an Arts Award online learning programme called *The Power of Public Art* for 11-18 year olds across Scotland.

Scottish Society for Art History – The Curator is a long-serving committee member of SSAH and helped to organise two successful online study days.

The Curator also continues to serve as a member of various other networks and collaborations including the Dundee Cultural Agencies Network and Scotland & Medicine.



People

Curator
Matthew Jarron

**Museum Engagement
Officers**
(from 06/07/2021)
Hope Busák
Amy Crawford

Volunteers and Work Placements
Cathy Caudwell
Zu Dominiak
Philomène Dubrun
Mattea Gernentz
Anna Grinev

Eva Jack
Angharad Jones
Heather McNab
Francesca Rye

In May 2021 we received the sad news that our former honorary curator of the Tayside Medical History Museum, Dr Graham Lowe, had passed away. Dr Lowe did a huge amount to expand the museum and its activities, creating a series of successful exhibitions and events. He was a much-loved and respected figure throughout the NHS and in his retirement he produced two popular books on Dundee's medical history, illustrated by material from our collections.

On a happier note, thanks to MGS funding we have been able to employ two Museum Engagement Officers on a short-term job-share basis, who started in July 2021. This will in some way make up for the loss of volunteer support we have experienced due to lockdown, which has effectively meant that we have been operating on less than 50% staffing resource for the past year.

Finance

Operating Budget 2020-21: nominally £12,680 (but essential expenditure only allowed)
Scottish Funding Council annual grant: £11,500

We also maintain the remainder of the Fine Art Fund set up in 1960 for the benefit of the University's art collections. This stood at £9,538.49 at 1 Aug 2020 and £7,860.83 at 31 July 2021.

Grants awarded:

£24,034 - MGS COVID Emergency Fund for employment of Museum Engagement Officer post for 9 months

£1,120 - National Fund for Acquisitions grant towards purchase of *Mashavi no 4*, a photographic artwork by Sekai Machache (shown below)

We were also part of a successful bid of £241,374 to the AHRC Capability for Collections fund in collaboration with DJCAD, the School of Humanities and Archive Services.



