

07 February 2023

## Reimagining the Museum...

### **The Powell-Cotton Trust undertakes vital conservation work in response to challenges facing the museum's collection**

Towards the latter end of 2022, the Powell-Cotton collections team became concerned about the conservation challenges facing the collection. Particularly worrying were the mould affecting material culture objects, and concerns about pests within one of the museum's Natural History stores.

Supported by the Trust, the museum will significantly increase the work it does on a daily basis to conserve and protect the collections going forward. This essential conservation project will span the whole of 2023 and is a major commitment of time, resource, and funding.

The Collections Department will apply their collective expertise and knowledge to lead the wider team in this vital and urgent conservation work. The Powell-Cotton Trust is committed to the conservation and re-housing of the affected objects. The project will involve systematically removing from storage, individually cleaning and treating thousands of objects.

Head of Collections, Dr. Nicola Stylianou commented, *"We take our responsibility to care for the collection very seriously and it has to be our first priority. We care for the collection on behalf of the local community, our visitors and researchers and people from the countries where the collections originated. We see this work as an extension of our 'People Matter' agenda because ultimately the important thing about the collection are the people that are connected to it across the globe."*

Alongside the conservation work, the Powell-Cotton Museum will also undertake significant repairs to the museum roof this year to prevent water ingress which can seriously affect the atmospheric conditions of the building. The floors in Galleries 2 and 3, which are beyond repair, will also be replaced. These on-going repairs and improvements to the fabric of the buildings form part of the wider strategy and commitment to secure a sustainable future for the museum.



Continuing the Powell-Cotton Museum's commitment to telling wider stories and enabling everyone to share in the narrative, the ongoing work of 'Reimagining the Museum' remains a key priority. The shift in focus toward the proposed conservation work is a necessary step towards this objective. The museum's responsibility to protect the objects in its care, and of course the individual histories and stories behind those objects is the ultimate priority - and to achieve this we must move this essential work forward. The planned building work also offers the opportunity to prepare the space properly for the re-interpretation projects that have been temporarily postponed during these essential works.

The Powell-Cotton Museum is for everyone – current and future audiences, staff, volunteers, the local community, and of course the communities descended from the places where the collections originate.

Powell-Cotton Museum CEO Nigel Lewis commented, *"We are embarking on a long-term plan of conservation and repair to the museum in order to protect the collection to ensure it continues to provide an educational based learning asset for decades and generations to come. The whole team are excited that this work not only ensures the continued protection of the collection but allows us to continue to tell the story of our history, artefacts and the culture it represents."*

As planned, the museum will open from **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October**, for weekends, bank holidays, and a programme of events. The Powell-Cotton Museum will continue to inform, educate and entertain visitors throughout the year. There may be an unavoidable need to temporarily close some galleries or remove some objects from display during the conservation work and in the first instance, Gallery 3 will be closed to the public, and Gallery 2 will be closed unless you are on a 'Highlights' tour. Tours are complimentary and times will be shown on the day of your visit.

Visitors and supporters will continue to be informed and engaged as and when planned gallery closures occur.

For more information, visit <https://powell-cottonmuseum.org/>

**Ends**



## Additional Information

### **About our Collections**

With over 20,000 ethnographic objects, 6,500 mammal specimens from Africa and India, and fine and decorative arts from across Asia, the PC Museum's collection is expansive, important and world-renowned. As well as displaying some of the oldest and largest taxidermy habitat dioramas in Europe (including the Kashmir Diorama which was completed in 1910), the museum also houses an internationally significant primate collection and important historic collections from South Sudan, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Uganda. It is also home to the largest collection of Angolan artefacts in Europe. The collections are accompanied by detailed archival and photographic records which contextualize the collections. This archive of supportive material contains over 30,000 photographs and 40,000 documents. The museum also houses approximately 8,000 archaeological finds from the Thanet coastline.

### **Community Participants**

We extend our thanks to our community participants who have been working closely with us and will continue to be part of the re-imagining of the museum.

### **Funding**

Arts Council England and other funders have been made aware of the situation and have agreed to defer projects to allow this essential and urgent work to begin immediately. We thank them for their understanding.

### **For more information:**

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