Editorial

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After a tumultuous year around the globe in the wake of COVID 19, the cultural sector, including museums, galleries, and other institutions, as well as universities, have emerged in 2021 scathed but still functioning. As an academic journal engaged with professional museum practice, it is to be expected that *Museum Worlds* 9 will reflect the unprecedented impact of the pandemic. If the 2020 issue was difficult to collate and produce, this year's issue was doubly so: academics and students are busy, stressed, and preoccupied with teaching online, while museum professionals are overworked, or out of work, or at home with their museums closed, and there are few exhibitions and public programs. Even the publishing industry seems to have been severely affected: new titles have been delayed, it is tricky to get books sent to readers due to holdups with freight, and writers, reviewers, and editors are busy, busy, busy.

Yet, despite the horrendous death toll, illness, and disruption, life has carried on and, in some parts of the world, things are returning to something resembling the pre-COVID world—not the same, not “normal,” but museums are re-opening, exhibitions are being installed, and visitors are coming through the door. Meanwhile, in universities, museum and heritage studies programs are gradually moving from teaching on the screen, via the ubiquitous Zoom, to face-to-face encounters in physical classrooms, and work placements and internships can happen on site. It is interesting to ponder, amidst so much turmoil, what has changed for good? For academics, conferences and symposia on site, overseas travel, multi-national research projects, and international students may well never return in their old form. Online meetings, seminars, and gatherings seem to have taken up this gap with alacrity, and in some cases provide even more extensive engagement, given that the digital sphere dispenses with the expense of air tickets, hotels, and catering for large live events.

For museum, gallery, and heritage professionals, travelling exhibitions are an endangered species, and they have had to dip into their own collections to stage displays, in many cases not a bad thing given the much-critiqued fad for blockbusters. Public programs and events front of house have been restricted, but the value of one-on-one encounters with art and artifacts, and the appeal of social interaction in public spaces, have been enhanced as relieved people leave lockdown and gather together to talk, touch, watch, learn, and interact. Meanwhile back of house, staff members have had more time to work on collections, often neglected with the former mania for experience, ever-increasing visitation targets, and making money. Much, then, that is a consequence of the last two years of turmoil is not necessarily negative, and is certainly ripe for debate and analysis. What do we keep and what do we let go? What do we return to, and what do we give up forever? What is core business, and what is nice to have? When everything solid

melts into pixels on a screen, what is the worth of real things, physical objects, moving bodies? What is the role of the museum post-COVID?

The strange current state of things in the museum world continues to be the focus for the thinking, research and writing, books, exhibitions, and gatherings that make up this journal. In the last issue, Sheila Hoffman questioned the panacea of digital access and virtual exhibitions that, perhaps too readily, claimed to be the answer to museums that had to close. Joanna Copley conducted a survey of museums after the pandemic, asking them how they were faring, what was happening, and what this meant for the future. Contributors from around the globe generously responded, providing a very valuable and widely read assessment of how museums were riding the storm. Now, a year later, Copley has repeated the exercise, asking some of the same writers where they are, a year on, in terms of their research. Her report in this year's issue, a continuing reflection on cultural and academic resilience, is sure to be of interest to readers everywhere. Written as "notes from the field," it explores the "overlaps between researcher development and the idea of academic resilience within the museum and heritage studies community." Copley compiles insightful narratives from researchers in different parts of the world that reveal common concerns, including "climate change, equity, well-being, resilience, and sustainability." She concludes on two important points: the value of collaboration, "sharing ideas, telling stories and posing new questions;" and the push for change, the "great appetite within the museum and heritage research community to challenge the status quo, and prepare for a radical, sustainable future."

The report section of the journal, demonstrated by Copley's valuable piece, continues to be a dynamic forum for contributions of varying kinds unconstrained by the conventions of academic research articles. This year the section has a cluster of diverse content: the above-mentioned global survey, the representation of a Jewish minority in a city museum in Turkey, a symposium on conservation science in Holland, a conversation between two directors of the Medical Museion in Copenhagen, and from Aotearoa New Zealand, a report on integrating colonial history into the national school curriculum through art education, plus a statement about current debates in Pasifika arts, heritage, and culture. This last report, which makes a passionate case to use the term "Moana Oceania," in place of the colonial moniker "Pacific," is a strong reminder that, as with 2020's protests and debates after Black Lives Matter, race, colonization and culture are still topics of urgent and sometimes strident debate in many countries. We hope that the renewed focus on ethics, equality, and justice, which is one of the few "positive" things that came out of 2020, along with a recognition of the climate crises and a host of other global issues, does not recede from view as economics, tourism, geo-politics, and "business as usual" settle back into their old, asymmetrical patterns.

It should be obvious to the reader that this section of the journal, and particularly the exhibition review section, feature more content from those regions of the world that have emerged from the pandemic and opened up, particularly Asia and the Pacific. We are pleased to present several reviews of exhibitions from China and Japan, more than we have ever had in the journal, thanks to the fruitful networking of Linda Da Kong, our reviews editor for Asia. There are also three reviews from Australia, one from Tasmania, one from Adelaide, and a review essay on three exhibitions exploring aspects of history and national identity in national institutions in Canberra written by Jennifer Coombes, the new reviews editor for Australia. In Aotearoa, where museums and galleries are also open, Joanna Copley has organized reviews of two fascinating exhibitions of contemporary Māori art. From South America, our new reviews editor and senior advisory editor, Bruno Brulon Soares, has contributed a fascinating review essay on the Museum of Removals in Rio de Janeiro. We are excited to have Bruno join the *Museum Worlds* editorial team, as he is well known for his work on expanding and diversifying museum studies beyond

its Anglophone enclave, and opening up discussion of difficult topics, such as decolonization. Meanwhile, in Europe we welcome another new reviews editor, Kristin Diana Hussey, who is based in Denmark, and who has contributed a book review and facilitated other reviews.

Although the book reviews are perhaps a little thin this year, given the problems of supply mentioned above, we hope that next year we might be able to catch up on the backlog of new volumes coming out—for some authors, at least, it seems that lockdown was very productive in terms of writing. We are delighted to publish one review essay by four enterprising PhD students from Europe, written as part of a collaborative research project about participatory memory practices, which considers Nuala Morse's new book *The Museum as a Space of Social Care*. In this essay, titled "Care-ful participation in museums," Inge Zwart, Susanne Boersma, Franziska Mucha, and Cassandra Kist evaluate Morse's topical argument in the context of the times we live in. "A logic of care may ... be useful for critically considering how museums or other institutions can step into activism," they point out, "by 'caring-with' to challenge larger social issues."

All in all, the reviews and review essays have benefitted enormously from the work of new reviews editors on the ground in different regions who are engaged with local issues and alert to new developments. We welcome this new editorial input, and look forward to further expanding our coverage, especially in the UK, Middle East, and Africa, in the quest to make *Museum Worlds* a genuinely global publication. Even with exhibition reviews, the shadow of the pandemic hangs over us, yet there are also glimmers of light, and a new appreciation of things we perhaps overlooked in our rush for novelty. Sheila Hoffman, reviews editor for North America, reflects on her visit to a small museum in Massachusetts. "After my visit to the Museum of Russian Icons, I am newly disposed to give more careful consideration to museum-as-temple," she writes; "[l]ike the houses of worship we neglect when times are good, this museum-as-temple made me grateful for what museums have been, even as we collectively hope and strive for renewal."

The research articles in this open issue of the journal exhibit the diversity and range which has come to be the hallmark of contemporary scholarship in museum studies and related fields. Michael Armand Canilao writes about the killing of an anthropologist in the Philippines, Susan Dine considers images of museums in the Afro-futurist Marvel blockbuster movie *Black Panther*, and Anna Bottesi examines secret and sacred objects from the Amazon (not) on display in an ethnographic exhibition in Vienna. Two major articles from the UK round out this section of the journal. Sara Selwood, a well-known scholar of cultural policy, comments on the extensive literature in the social sciences that analyses the cultural sector, including the value and performance of museums and galleries. Unfortunately, many professionals in the sector find policy studies a dry topic, but experience has shown how important it is to grapple with this crucial domain in order to actively shape policy and speak back to local and central governments rather being the passive victim of ever-changing funding paradigms. "While the cultural sector initially looked to social scientists to research its evidence-base and support its advocacy," Selwood writes, "the sector itself became the subject of economists and sociologists' own studies... However niche, or myopic, their concerns might appear, the ramifications of the issues they raise go far beyond the cultural sector." She concludes: "Various economists have recently commented on the consequences of financial value being held in higher regard than human value and as having contributed to the climate and COVID crises, inequality, and democracy crises." Scholars have "pinpointed the extraction of value, rather than its creation, as causing us to lose sight of what value really means and the possibility to learn what really matters."

The last article in this issue is a chapter reproduced with the kind permission of Routledge from the book *The Museum's Borders: On the Challenges of Knowing and Remembering Well*, by Simon J. Knell. Completed in lockdown and published in 2020, this short, readable book is the perfect commentary on the need for the museum in our modern world, as "an autonomous

institution critical to knowledge-based democracies.” Responding to exhibitions about the Windrush scandal in 2018, the British Government’s hostile approach to historic migrants to Britain from the Caribbean, which exposed widespread institutional racism, Knell considers how borders are erected and torn down, and the part that museums can play in both acts. He argues that:

The Windrush scandal and these attempts to manufacture ideological truths provide exemplary arguments for why we need museums and libraries to build a cohesive and effective state that has a non-partisan grip on reality. These arguments challenge a view, prevalent in recent decades and originating in the business-oriented methods of New Public Management with their concern for markets, management, and measurement, that the museum should be understood simply as a “creative industry.” ... Past become forgotten or performed for profit or institutional success rather than to meet societal need. The Windrush scandal occurred through institutional neglect. For all that the museums and libraries acted to know and remember well in 2018, these institutions, too, had so often, and for too long, forgotten and failed to know.

Simon Knell is Professor of Contemporary Museology at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, one of a handful of scholars who has shaped and developed the field over the last two decades. From a background in geology and cultural geography, Knell has written authoritatively about an astonishing range of museum history and practice: from collections care and management, including essential work on collection rationalization, to material culture, art, and national museums and galleries. He describes the common focus in his research as “knowledge communities, disciplinarity, and the object/museum”. Author of more than twenty books, he has edited and co-edited important collections that are required reading in the courses we teach: one on the future of collecting (Knell 2004), the edited volume *Museum Revolutions* (Knell et al. 2007), a comprehensive survey of national museums (Knell et al. 2010), and *The Contemporary Museum: Shaped By and For the Here and Now* (Knell 2019), which includes papers presented at the fiftieth anniversary conference of the School of Museum Studies at Leicester.

Knell must be one of the most widely travelled academics I know—his passport has stamps from all over the globe—and his lectures and publications are illustrated with his own photographs of a remarkable array of museums and galleries large and small, near and far. Quite apart from teaching on the master’s degree program at Leicester, and supervising a veritable legion of PhD students, Knell has been heavily involved in academic management. He led the department through the REF research assessment in 2008 when it came out as the top-ranked unit, in any discipline, in any university, in the UK.

This outstanding result reflects the extraordinary contribution this group of scholars, and their graduates, have made to museum studies over the years, and not least to this journal. One of the other leading lights in this stellar cohort at Leicester is the current Head of School, Professor Sandra Dudley, who, as well as producing several of the must-read texts in the field in relation to museum theory, material culture, and anthropology, was the founding general editor of this journal in 2012, along with Kylie Message. After almost a decade at the helm, steering *Museum Worlds* to the position it now enjoys as one of the leading journals in the field, Sandra is moving on to new challenges. We want to thank her for her vision, hard work, and generosity. In 2022, we welcome a new general editor, Professor Alison Brown from the University of Aberdeen, who has worked as a curator and researcher in UK museums, as well as being a leading international scholar of museum studies and museum anthropology. We look forward to working with her on the next issue of *Museum Worlds*, number 10, marking our first ten years.

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