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**Pitt Rivers Museum wins Esmée Fairbairn Foundation award**

The Pitt Rivers Museum is delighted to have been awarded £119,912 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

This award will fund a two-year collaborative project between the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Museum of the History of Science. The funding will enable both museums to create inclusive volunteering experiences, enabling people from refugee communities to improve confidence, support community integration and enhance the collections by developing a multi-layered interpretation. The project will focus on the Pitt Rivers’ textiles and costume collection, particularly textiles from the Arab world, and the collection of astronomical instruments from the Islamic world at the Museum of the History of Science.

This project will bring these objects and their unique stories to life for the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the museums, and the millions who learn about the collections through social media, the internet and online databases. It will provide a different narrative on forced migration by looking at the rich culture and immense scientific contribution of communities that are now affected by war.

For our community partners, these collections may no longer exist in their countries of origin or are under severe threat due to conflict. We hope to create a sense of belonging, offer positive experiences of inclusion and value as people make new relationships, settle and make new homes. At the same time, we aim to provide interesting and unique opportunities for people to learn about their own and others’ historic and cultural heritages. Our community partners will have unique and personal knowledge, enabling them to explain and share the significance and meaning of objects with others. We aim to make the Museum a more relevant and welcoming place for visitors from local communities and from around the world.

Dr. Laura Van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, said: "This grant will have a tremendous impact on our work with refugees and forced migrants in Oxfordshire who have suffered a process of displacement. The grant means that we can develop our pilot project that is coming to an end with the installation of two co-curated exhibitions (*Identity without Borders* and *Syrians Unknown*) and include work on our textile collections. It enables us to extend its reach to the Museum of the History of Science. With this support, we will have the resources to work directly with

refugee volunteers on the textile and astronomical instruments collections, which we have learned to be a learning experience for all parties involved, bringing in new audiences and constructing meaningful additional content to museums like ours. In other museums, training of refugees to become guides and community curators has proven of invaluable importance in aiding integration and finding a new sense of belonging in the new hometowns (e.g. Berlin, Amsterdam and Dresden/Leipzig). Feedback from the pilot project has shown that this partnership helps participants to develop self-confidence, enhances visibility and an overall feeling of wellbeing and also enables refugees to build new networks with heritage institutions that otherwise might not have opened their doors so easily.

We are looking forward to an exciting two years of deepening and building our partnerships with refugees and with organisations and communities that support them."

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**Notes for Editors**

* The Pitt Rivers Museum is one of Oxford’s most popular attractions, famous for its period atmosphere and outstanding collections from many cultures around the world, past and present. Admission, exhibitions and events are free.
* The Pitt Rivers Museum was founded in 1884 when General Pitt-Rivers, an influential figure in the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology, gave his personal collection of some 30,000 items to the University on condition that a museum was built to house the material, and that a post was created to lecture in anthropology. Today the collection numbers some 600,000 items, and the Museum remains an active department of Oxford University, doing and supporting research and teaching in archaeology and anthropology.
* The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future, by funding the charitable work of organisations that are building an inclusive, creative and sustainable society. The Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK. In 2016 it made grants of £42.4 million towards a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment and social change. It also has a £45 million allocation to social investments for organisations with the aim of creating social impact. For more information see https://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/home.

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