

Press Release: for immediate release

Manchester Museum appoints first ever Curator of Indigenous Perspectives

Alexandra P. Alberda has been appointed to take forward the innovative 'Indigenising Manchester Museum' programme, funded by the John Ellerman Foundation, which will set Indigenous perspectives at the heart of the museum.

The 'Indigenising Manchester Museum' programme is part of Manchester Museum's exciting £13.5 million transformation 'hello future'. It exemplifies the museum's ambition to become the most inclusive, imaginative and caring you might imagine. Manchester Museum, part of The University of Manchester, will grow a curatorial culture conscious of the legacies of Empire and colonialism, working with Indigenous people to effect reconciliation.

Indigenous perspectives and knowledge will be introduced and highlighted across the breadth of Manchester Museum's encyclopaedic collection, from plant specimens to ceremonial objects. Untold stories and critical understandings will emerge through a programme centred on the museum collections, and the role people who care for them can play in reconciliation and healing.

Alexandra P. Alberda will work with the whole museum team, Indigenous people and partners including the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to develop, embed and share new ways of working. She will continue a process of long-term change at Manchester Museum, and in doing so create a model for museums across the globe that aim to decolonise their institutions.

Alexandra P. Alberda was born in Bozeman, Montana, USA, and spent a majority of her youth growing up in Bismarck, North Dakota, USA. She is mixed race and Jemez Pueblo, which has meant that she has grown up at the thresholds of cultures. She believes that her ethnicity and personal experience has informed her professional practice as she personally navigates conflicting and complimenting cultures and has been fortunate to have family members who continue to help her learn and grow in these spiritually and professionally.

During her Masters at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Alexandra was the graduate research assistant at the Great Plains Art Museum, part of the Centre for Great Plains Studies, where she was exhibition coordinator for Contemporary Indigeneity: The New Art of the Great Plains and worked with Johanna Sawyer on The Cinematic Framing of the West, which addressed misconceptions in depictions of Western and Native Peoples in art and film and the role museums play in reiterating these misconceptions in current socio-cultural understandings.

Alexandra P. Alberda joins Manchester Museum from Bournemouth University where she was a doctoral researcher and research illustrator. Her PhD, titled Graphic Medicine Exhibited: Public Engagement with Comics in Curatorial Practice and Visitor Experience since 2010, explores the intersections of the comics medium, health, and exhibition to understand potential activist and community-based methodological approaches and sociocultural values of these experiences. In doing so, her research critically engages with institutional structures of power that limit civic engagement and do not facilitate needed reparative reconciliation, amplification of marginalised voices, and displacement of (colonial) power. As a research illustrator she has worked on a number of projects, including The Data Storytelling Workbook (Routledge 2020).

Alexandra P. Alberda, newly appointed Curator of Indigenous Perspectives said:

"Indigenising museums must account for multiplicity and celebration of peoples that respects their own unique outlooks on the representation of culture. I look forward to the opportunity to be a part of the conversation and action that aims to reflect this in museums."

Esme Ward, Director of Manchester Museum said:

"I'm really looking forward to welcoming Alexandra and taking forward this much-needed work. Her experience and approach will create conditions for new forms of understanding and connectedness within and beyond Manchester Museum."

Gareth Clayton, Grants Manager, John Ellerman Foundation said:

"John Ellerman Foundation is very pleased to be supporting the Indigenising Manchester Museum project through the Museums and Galleries Fund. We welcome Alexandra to the role and look forward to see the impact of this important work both inside and outside the museum."

Participating partners include the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies <https://aiatsis.gov.au/>

This work is generously supported by the John Ellerman Foundation <https://ellerman.org.uk/>

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Notes to Editors

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About the John Ellerman Foundation

John Ellerman Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation supporting charities that make a difference to people, society and the natural world.

The Museums and Galleries Fund aims to help strengthen museums and galleries in the UK. We want to help organisations enhance and sustain curatorial development to attract a broader and more diverse public. The application period for the latest round of funding ended on the 8th January 2021. Potential future rounds will be announced toward the end of 2021.

About Manchester Museum

Manchester Museum, part of The University of Manchester, first opened in 1890. It is the UK's largest university museum with a collection of about 4.5 million items from every continent. Its combination of the academic and the popular is what makes the Museum so distinctive and lies at the heart of its widespread appeal. The Museum's vision is to build understanding between cultures and a sustainable world. Every year over half a million people visit. Over the next two years, Manchester Museum is working towards an exciting new £13.5 million project *hello future*, to transform and develop the Museum becoming more inclusive, imaginative and caring to the diverse communities it serves.

The hello future transformation includes:

- A new Exhibition Hall
- South Asia Gallery
- Lee Kai Hung Chinese Culture Gallery
- Redisplayed galleries
- New entrance and visitor facilities with focus on inclusive and accessible design

www.manchester.ac.uk/museum

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