

**Press release - Embargoed until 1 July**

### **Manchester Museum receives grant to support neurodiverse children and young adults**

Manchester Museum, part of the University of Manchester, has been awarded £43,118 by The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Digital Innovation and Engagement Fund to launch an innovative project supporting neurodiverse children and young adults.

The 12-month project will see the museum work collaboratively with students from Grange School, a local school for autism, and Project Inc., a specialist college for creative education, to create Digital Touch Replicas (DTR) and web-based resources for the museum's ['Golden Mummies'](#) collection.

Digital Touch Replicas are physical objects that can be explored by touch. Feeling different areas of the surface triggers hidden electronics, which in turn plays information relating to the area on a screen or tablet.

Physical interaction with objects is particularly important for visitors with sensory impairments and for those who need to make physical connections with objects to make sense of them.

This DTR technology, which aims to make museums more accessible, is based on research by Sam Beath, Senior Conservator at Manchester Museum, as part of a PHD at Loughborough University. It's been developed in collaboration with Laser Optical Engineering Ltd, Tamarisk Kay and Freeform Studios.

For some neurodiverse individuals, touching objects can be problematic and so tailored online content will support their visit to the museum.

'Golden Mummies' is currently touring the world and will be one of the centrepieces of the museum's £13.5m ['hello future'](#) capital transformation.

#### **Manchester Museum's Director, Esme Ward, said:**

*"We are thrilled to receive this support from the Digital Innovation and Engagement Fund, which enables us to evolve our digital practice and deliver diverse content to more people. The voices of young neurodiverse people are often not included within traditional exhibition settings and so this is a hugely significant project that reflects our core values of being inclusive, caring and imaginative."*

The Digital Innovation and Engagement Fund, a collaboration between UKRI-AHRC and The Museum's Association, is awarding grants totally £600,000 to 14 organisations.

#### **Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive of UKRI, said:**

*"Museums play a vital role in bringing communities together; they help us to understand our past and imagine a better future. This investment will bring diverse, underrepresented voices into museums to share their experiences, so that new audiences benefit from our outstanding museums and museums benefit from different perspectives. Coming together as a society to*

*learn and discover new things is a key part of our cultural lives, and the recipients of this funding will help to facilitate this in novel and exciting ways."*

**Sharon Heal, Museums Association Director, said:**

*"The Digital Innovation and Engagement grants were a timely opportunity for museums to build on their creativity in engaging their communities during lockdown and to develop their skills in the digital space. The 14 grants awarded represent the best of a very competitive funding round and range from innovative co-curated online tours to explore decolonial narratives, to creative online forums for care-leavers. Working with UKRI-AHRC has helped us develop a ground-breaking funding stream that will support museums to build on the new ways of working that have evolved in the pandemic and we look forward to continuing this partnership."*

**ENDS**

Notes to editors

### **Manchester Museum**

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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.museum.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk)

@mcrmuseum

### **UK Research and Innovation UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)**

For further information or to arrange an interview with a UKRI-AHRC spokesperson please contact: Alex Fyans, UKRI Press Officer Email: [Alexander.Fyans@ukri.org](mailto:Alexander.Fyans@ukri.org) Mobile: 07522 218070

About UK Research and Innovation UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is the largest public funder of research and innovation in the UK, with a budget of around £8bn.

It is composed of seven disciplinary research councils, Innovate UK and Research England.

We operate across the whole country and work with our many partners in higher education, research organisations businesses, government, and charities.

Our vision is for an outstanding research and innovation system in the UK that gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and to benefit, enriching lives locally, nationally and internationally.

Our mission is to convene, catalyse and invest in close collaboration with others to build a thriving, inclusive research and innovation system that connects discovery to prosperity and public good.

About the Arts and Humanities Research Council The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, funds internationally outstanding independent researchers across the whole range of the arts and humanities: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages and literature, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more.

The quality and range of research supported by AHRC works for the good of UK society and culture and contributes both to UK economic success and to the culture and welfare of societies across the globe.