

Scrutiny Bulletin: 30 October 2023

Title of Update: RAMM Annual Review 2022-23 and Q2 2023-24 Quarterly Report

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1. What is the update about?

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM) has recently produced its 2022-23 Annual Review, which is attached to this update.

The museum would also like to share its quarterly highlights report, which is below.

2. Background

Every year, RAMM produces an annual review which it shares with key stakeholders, funders etc. It is an opportunity to profile the work of the museum and the impact it has on the city's communities. It highlights work undertaken as a result of Arts Council investment in RAMM.

The quarterly highlights report is taken to RAMM's Oversight Panel and reported to Arts Council England as part of its National Portfolio Organisation funding agreement. The oversight panel consists of six councillors and two external representatives.

3. Current position

Highlights report – 2023-24 (Q2)

Activity plan

Visitor Experience (Activity 1)

- Q2 saw the successful completion of the DDF 'Ancestral Voices' project. Three large showcases in the Americas gallery, along with the adjacent wall space, have been completely refurbished and redisplayed with collections previously in store or new to RAMM following a programme of consultation, research and conservation.

Among the new star items is a regalia donated in 2022 by the Siksika Nation at the time of RAMM's repatriation of the Crowfoot Regalia.

- Volunteer tour guides hosted a homeless organisation visit. Collaboration with community connectors from Wellbeing Exeter/Age UK is thriving, launching a new monthly cultural offer to support people over 50 experiencing isolation and mental health issues. A first Friendly Friday group visited a contemporary art exhibition hosted by a curator.
- RAMM's age-friendly outreach continues to reach new care homes, day groups, social housing community centres and hospital wards, with multisensory object-handling to spark relaxed conversation.

Exhibitions and Events (Activity 2)

- RAMM's summer exhibition season concluded successfully with the ending of 'Gatekeepers to Heaven' featuring medieval manuscripts on 3 Sept and 'Sublime Symmetry: the mathematics behind De Morgan's ceramic designs' on 10 Sept. 'Gatekeepers' attracted over 30,000 visits and through IIT assessment showed a 99% rating of Excellent or Good. 'Sublime Symmetry', with charged for admission, welcomed over 2,000 individuals and 275 group visits and achieved its targets.
- To tie in with the famous Exeter Puzzle jug shown in 'Gatekeepers' RAMM invited a local enthusiast to display their collection of puzzle jugs in the 'What Do You Collect Case?' from 18 July.
- 'Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary' opened over two galleries on 23 Sept. This critically acclaimed exhibition is toured by Hayward Gallery Touring and has shown only at Nottingham Contemporary, Glucksman (Cork) and RAMM. It features major works by an array of artists ranging from Joseph Wright of Derby to Magritte and Henry Moore.
- We had a fantastic summer of events this year, welcoming over 2,600 visitors across the 4 weeks of activities. All our activities took on a medieval theme, taking inspiration from Gatekeepers to Heaven. We were able to offer both free and paid for events for our audiences due to external project funding for the exhibition. The swoosh and clang of swords rang through the museum (and in the garden when the sun shone!) as young knights joined the Iron Door Collective to learn about medieval sword fighting and have a go themselves. Many families stayed for the whole session queuing over and over to have another go; several families came back more than once. The audiences that joined us for our Falconry display events in the garden enjoyed birds swooping over their heads and the chance to get up close to falcons, owls and vultures. Our craft activities featured illuminated letter drawing, trebuchet making and medieval moneybags. As ever the buzz in the courtyard and the smiles on children's faces when they created their own masterpiece was great to see! Visitors enjoyed our willow weaving workshops, making swords, medieval baskets and headwear. We saw children spending a

dedicated few hours on their pieces and taking a real joy in their creations. Finally, LEGO returned to RAMM in the form of catapults, castles and horses. One of our visitors commented *"7 year old Lego fanatic grandson and myself really enjoyed this. Lego expert was extremely helpful (Grandma not too good on cogs!) and all the children and carers had terrific fun. We love the RAMM children's' activities!"*

Digital (Activity 3)

- In the course of Q2 RAMM has implemented Microsoft 365. This has been driven by a team of M365 Champions who have been sharing best practice with their colleagues and implementing a new architecture for Teams to improve digital collaboration and productivity throughout the museum.
- Screen-based content and digital interactivity in the 'Gatekeepers to Heaven' exhibition was critical for engaging with our audiences. In an exhibition heavily reliant on the written word, this additional visual and audio content helped to encourage family groups into the gallery who may otherwise may not have entered.

Contemporary Art (Activity 4)

- M. H. Sarkis's RAMM commission 'Votive for the Next Earth' (disabled artist commission) continues to be displayed in the Finders Keepers? gallery and Michelle Williams Gamaker 'The Silver Wave' continues its very successful showing in the Americas Gallery.
- Developmental work for new commissions is now well underway for a Dartmoor exhibition next year. To complement the commission of Alex Hartley will be a new work by Ashish Ghadiali.
- Commissioning also continues with artists Ashanti Hare; Janet Sainsbury and Sarah Gillespie.
- Following the opening of Celine Condorelli's 'Pentimenti' at the National Gallery, RAMM is in negotiation with the Contemporary Art Society to select one of Condorelli's new works for acquisition by RAMM.

Children and Young people (Activity 5)

- New creative activity game cards called 'See Things Differently' were produced to encourage young participants to interact with the latest contemporary art exhibition at RAMM. These fun free resources were illustrated by local up-and-coming artist Molly Saunders and are available for visitors to pick up in the gallery under three categories: Draw, Write and Play. Over 200 visitors have engaged with the cards already in the first 2 weeks of the exhibition opening.
- The first pilot workshop at RAMM for home educated families took place in September around the theme of Ancient Egypt, run by the museum's volunteer

schools team. 20 children aged 7 – 11 took part with excellent feedback. RAMM now plans to run three different themed home education workshops per term going forward.

- Planning progressed for Dartmoor Frame of Mind project for children and young people linking to the Dartmoor Photography exhibition planned for RAMM in 2024. Partners Youth Arts & Health Trust and artist Jo Bradford have been involved in finalising the project parameters ready for the next phase which involves recruiting young participants via mental health organisation referrals ready for the delivery stage in February next year.

Individual Creativity (Activity 6)

- Age-friendly art activities delivered at older people's mental health wards in NHS hospital.
- Over the summer holidays RAMM welcomed 109 family visitors from lower income neighbourhoods in Bridgetown, Buckfastleigh, Princetown and Bovey Tracey to participate a series of free 'illuminated letter' craft workshops inspired by the medieval themed exhibition Gatekeepers to Heaven. These trips were organised by a Community Interest Company set up to tackle health, social, and economic inequalities in Buckfastleigh and other small rural towns. The sessions were funded by an external project grant.
- RAMM also visited the Wonford social housing summer festival and the Beacon Centre's 'Family Fun' days with medieval themed craft activities. Around 80 children and young people from lower socio-economic neighbourhoods in Exeter took part over the summer holiday period.
- Alongside the family event programme we ran an Illuminated Letter workshop for adults where participants were guided through creating their own medieval letter design. We also held an event inspired by Sublime Symmetry. RAMM's Youth Panel invited visitors to embrace their creative nature and explore their artistic visions by taking part in *Seize the Clay*, an intimate, interactive event, featuring an evening of pottery painting within the walls of the museum.

Skills Development (Activity 7)

- Skills Development Officer met with Cathedral staff in summer to provide advice on how to set-up their own Youth Panel. The Cathedral have now successfully set up their own Youth Panel (September) and we hope to continue to share learning through shared talks and visits to each other's organisation.
- Nine young people completed a one-week work experience for 15-17 year olds.

- Cat Easeman is completing a placement with the Development Team. 1 day a week.
- Laurel Brock is completing a 1022 hour placement with the Collections and Audience Development Team.
- Elle Norris is completing a placement with the Collections Team. 1 day a week.
- Uschi Lebersorger is completing a placement with the Audience Development Team (Engagement). 1 day a week. Uschi is a widening participation individual.
- Beatriz Barbosa Tourinho is completing a placement with the Collections Team, 1 day a week. Beatriz is a widening participation student.
- 15 young people have joined RAMM's new Youth Panel.
- Five people have joined RAMM's Future Skills Programme.

Dynamic Collections (Activity 8)

- The NLHF funded project at RAMM has required a number of staff changes. The necessary HR work was completed during Q2. RAMM's current Digital Media Officer has agreed to be seconded to the Dynamic Collections project and an Engagement Officer post is now under recruitment.

University collaboration (Activity 9)

- Based on RAMM's learning in the Creative Arc pilot projects a new partnership guide is in production to aid staff working in collaborative ventures, especially with the HE sector.
- RAMM is working closely with University of Exeter academics from the data sciences department and Exeter Urban research network, on next year's transport-themed exhibition. A project initiation document has been produced, taking learning from the partnership working handbook mentioned above, and data projects are in planning process, with two research students recruited.

Investment principles plan

[More information on Arts Council England's Investment Principles here.](#)

Ambition & Quality

- On 19 Sept RAMM's second staff sounding board took place on the theme of ambition and quality. At this session all staff were invited to contribute to the museum's quality improvement process and were asked to signal new directions for future programming.

- An IIT assessment was completed for the 'Gatekeepers to Heaven' exhibition. The two key performance indicators of increasing core visits post Covid-19 and increasing overall satisfaction were achieved. The results of the IIT were discussed by staff at the exhibition debrief session held on 26 Sept.

Inclusivity & Relevance

- RAMM's Audience Development Lead met with the Collections and Access Manager at Barnstaple and North Devon Museum to share knowledge about RAMM's LGBTQ+ project, Out and About: Queering the Museum.
- Staff sounding board on I&R held on 17 Jul to gather feedback from staff on how we make RAMM a welcoming place for everyone. Ideas will feed into future plans.
- Online educational resources as a legacy of RAMM exhibition on the links between Devon and the transatlantic slave trade have been launched, after long collaboration with local diversity consultants. The resources, written in plain language, are intended for KS3 History. They also complement KS2 topics such as Chocolate, Explorers, Inspirational Figures, Tudors, and Victorians, and are suitable for homelearners of all ages. They include online information for teachers; a Kahoot quiz of top facts to remember; a glossary of terms to talk about race and history, for educators to catch up with current thinking and increase confidence to discuss past and present; a timeline – from the 1400s to the 1800s, highlighting Devon connections, uprisings in the Caribbean, and key moments on the path to abolition and a range of brief and interesting videos.
- Close partnership with Wellbeing Exeter social prescribing network is contributing valuable evidence and information about community needs, to inform cultural offers.
- RAMM's engagement team had various different meetings over the summer with Exeter Cathedral, Daisi (Arts inspired learning charity), Peterborough Museum and the Horniman Museum to share knowledge and best practice about running Arts Award programmes at RAMM and engaging with home education audiences.
- Demographics report and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan presented to Oversight Panel.
- RAMM's Skill Development Officer piloted a new inclusive hiring process for RAMM's Youth Panel and Future Skills Programme. This included sending a visual story of the room layout and the interview questions in advance. All applicants seemed more relaxed and their questions were well thought though. Two applicants were neurodiverse and they commented that this had helped relieve their anxiety.
- Created Visual Story for temporary exhibition 'Hollow Earth', as well as monthly relaxed sessions for people with neurodiversity or other associated conditions.

Environmental Responsibility

- Work on the MEND funded project to replace and insulate Victorian roofs across approx one quarter of the building and provide additional PV panelling commenced in September. The project will run for approximately 36 weeks; due to finish on 26th April 2024.
- ECC has been awarded significant funding from the government PSDS fund for the replacement of gas boilers with air source heat pumps at 2 properties, including RAMM. With the object of decarbonising RAMM's energy use. The contract for the first design stage was awarded in July to Cenergist. During Q2 Cenergist has been drafting the Design Brief and Outline Specification for the scheme, with the first progress meeting booked for 26th September.

Dynamism

- New model for age-friendly activities, providing some subsidised through social prescribers, others at full cost to care homes, and through partnerships with ECC social housing sector and NHS hospital.
- Repair work to roof is having an impact on income from venue hire and events in the museum, due to lack of spaces for events.

4. Future position

n/a

5. Are there any other options?

n/a

6. Conclusion

RAMM continues to deliver a varied, inclusive and ambitious programme of activities to its audiences in the city and further afield.

A recent study based on the Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) model methods in the UK HM Treasury Green Book Guidance (2020) and circulated by ACE in 2021 show RAMM's economic impact to be in the region of £3.1M per annum. A new study this year (South West Museums using AIM Economic Impact Toolkit) values the economic benefit of RAMM to the local economy as being £5.1M. This is due to increasing numbers post pandemic.