

**Scrutiny Bulletin: 8 April 2024**

**Title of Update: RAMM Quarterly Highlights Report**

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## **1. What is the update about?**

This is the quarterly highlights report for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, showing museum activity for the period January to March 2024.

## **2. Background**

The quarterly highlights report, along with other reports showing activity against targets, 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**

### **Activity plan**

#### **Visitor Experience (Activity 1)**

- This quarter RAMM continued its wellbeing offer with a 4-week mindfulness in partnership with Devon Recovery Learning Community. 12 participants were invited to explore different artefacts in the museum using mindfulness, to cultivate an awareness of their senses and breathing whilst learning to look at objects in a different way.
- RAMM's delivered two Friendly Fridays (with World Cultures store tour and printmaking activity), a History gallery visit for a football club social group, and a talk about Devon's cream teas (with scones) for over-50s dealing with anxiety and depression.

- The museum café vouchers scheme paused on a high, reaching around 131 in the final quarter (representing some 180 people, since most vouchers are used for two visitors). Use of this flexible tool was increasing, and RAMM hopes to restart it in the autumn, when mental health issues tend to soar.

## Exhibitions and Events (Activity 2)

- In January, RAMM opened 'ARTIST ROOMS: Bill Viola'. The exhibition shows three works from the well-known *Passion* series by Viola, the internationally recognised pioneer of video art. The exhibition is part of the national programme managed by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. RAMM is the first venue taking this curated selection of Viola's poignant work.
- At the end of January RAMM revealed the latest re-hang of its fine art collection. 'Pressing Images' tells the story of printmaking from medieval Europe through to the 21st century using RAMM's outstanding collection: from Albrecht Dürer to William Hogarth to Devon-born trailblazer Dorothea Wight and much more.
- Sold-out February half term activities included love-themed craft sessions, storytelling, and puppetry with global inspiration. African drumming appealed across generations, while roaming historic characters in costume engaged visitors in conversation. 460 visitors participated over the week.
- We ran a darning workshop with Molly Rooke from Darnit! and welcomed an intimate group of visitors to a short course on the impact of printmaking on the art world.
- A Murder Mystery evening took place at which 60 visitors discovered the culprit of The Grey Withers drama.

## Digital (Activity 3)

- Following formal adoption by ECC in the last quarter, in February, RAMM publicly announced its Open Access policy and partnership with the GLAM-E lab at the University of Exeter. In 2024, RAMM will begin releasing selected digital assets from its collection to tie in with topical issues and anniversaries.
- RAMM configured Google Tag Manager and GA4 for RAMM's primary website ([rammuseum.org.uk](http://rammuseum.org.uk)). RAMM is now able to track website traffic and engagement with greater granularity e.g., purchases. Starting in Q4 2023-24, RAMM will initiate detailed quarterly reporting on website performance.

## Contemporary Art (Activity 4)

- On 21 February artist Ashanti Hare gave their first performance of 'River that never rests', a work inspired by the river Exe and Hare's research into Central African power bundles or minkisi. Hare's work, which was livestreamed, was supported by two other pieces of

contemporary dance in an evening of experimental performance at RAMM, attracting an audience of more than 100.

- From March to September Hare's filmed performance is being shown in the Courtyard gallery along with objects used in it along with objects from RAMM's collection.
- RAMM's contemporary art commissions continue to be shown at RAMM: 'The silver Wave' by Michelle Williams Gamaker and 'Janet Sainsbury: Points in a Constellation'.

### **Children and Young people (Activity 5)**

- RAMM created partnerships with Youth Arts & Health Trust (YAHT) and Green Island Studios to plan and prepare resources for the launch of the Dartmoor Frame of Mind photography project in February 2024. This project is supporting 48 young people aged 12-18 who have referrals for mental health support. The participants are using photography to engage with the nature, wilderness and landscape of Dartmoor led by a photographic artist based on Dartmoor. The young people will create art which will go on display for over five months in a special exhibition in the Café at RAMM. The project kick-started at the end of February with a series of 6 weekly live group zoom tutorials lead by artis Jo Bradford and YAHT.
- 40 Exeter College Dance and Fashion and Textiles students aged 16 to 19 created and delivered a dance performance in RAMM's galleries in response to the Bill Viola exhibition. Dance students performed a series of beautifully choreographed solos wearing specially designed skirts made by the Fashion and Textiles students inspired by their visit to RAMM, culminating in a group performance in the Courtyard.
- 16 young people from the bereavement charity Balloons visited RAMM for their annual activity day. Their visit included a guided tour of the current 'Pressing Images' print making exhibition and a print making craft workshop inspired by the exhibition content.
- RAMM delivered a new series of craft workshops aimed at home educated families aged 5-11, inspired by the World Cultures collection, with great feedback.
- RAMM's Arts Award offer continues to be popular, with 39 young people completing their Discover Arts Award in the galleries using our two bespoke self-guided activity booklets.

### **Individual Creativity (Activity 6)**

- We welcomed a weekly social group learning knitting in the museum café.
- RAMM created opportunities for older people to be creative, with dementia-friendly animation on a hospital ward; a dementia-friendly cream tea with choir and intergenerational craft activity.
- We launched a new collaboration with Tanglewood to develop craft activities appealing to men and boys.

## **Skills Development (Activity 7)**

- Attended the Archaeology and Heritage Fair at the University of Exeter.
- The Youth Panel exhibition, Data-day life, opened in the RAMM Café. This exhibition explores how data from our daily lives can be creatively expressed in engaging and innovative ways across twelve individually designed banners. Visitors can see the creative presentation of a wide variety of data sets collected from the routines of Youth Panel members' daily lives. These range from mundane daily occurrences to emotive commentaries on personal challenges faced in light of medical conditions and disabilities.
- Four people have completed supported placements in Visitor Services roles.
- One student from the University of Exeter is completing a placement with Visitor Services. Nell's placement is for 300 hours.
- 9 people joined the Future Skills programme.
- One student from the University of Exeter started a 1 day a week placement with Contemporary Art.
- Three students from the University of Exeter completed a placement module for their MA Curation degree.
- Two people started an Access to Internship and will be assisting in the Dynamic Collections project.
- Three people have started a 1 day a week placement with the Collections team.

## **Dynamic Collections (Activity 8)**

- Two students have started on placements to support both the digital and engagement strands of the Dynamic Collections project.
- External evaluators have been appointed and produced an evaluation strategy and framework for the project.
- Our first sessions with community groups from Hikmat were on 27 and 28 March, and a family focused session on 5 April (Easter hols). These are initial 'getting to know you' sessions to introduce them to the museum.
- The first community project will focus on the theme of Food, connected to RAMM's exhibition theme for March 2025. The project will explore the importance of food in connecting us to place and other people.

## **University collaboration (Creative Arc) (Activity 9)**

- RAMM has been working with University of Exeter Data and Computer Sciences dept (academics and students), and Exeter Science Centre to deliver a series of community workshops on the theme of Transport. The comments and outputs from the workshop will be included in RAMM's exhibition on transport opening in June 2024. Topics explored include transport history of Exeter, people's views of transport in the city currently and their

vision for a positive transport future for Exeter. We have so far delivered 3 workshops with community groups (approx. 36 people) and will deliver one further session in April.

- People from Afghanistan, China, Libya, the Philippines and Singapore piloted activities around food and evocative, multisensory memories sparked by the Making History galleries and handling collections - in collaboration with Dynamic Collections.

## **Investment principles plan**

### **Ambition & Quality**

- A new Ambition & Quality Action Plan 2024-26 has been drafted and will be presented to the Oversight Panel on 16 April.
- As part of the A&Q Plan a new Ambition & Quality Staff Guide has been produced to help RAMM's team focus on progressing the organisation's ambitions derived from the Vision and Mission statements. The guide will be introduced to staff next quarter and will be regularly reviewed based on feedback.
- Three Impact & Insight toolkit evaluations have been carried out this quarter. We have used the I&I methodology on the Ancestral Voices cases in World Cultures; an evening of performance by commissioned contemporary artist Ashanti Hare; and a workshop for the Transport exhibition. Analysis of results are ongoing.

### **Inclusivity & Relevance**

- Colleagues attended the 'Start to sign' course run by RNID and ongoing follow up sessions have been scheduled for team members to practice and keep up their skills.
- A new BSL introduction to the museum video has been produced.
- Engagement and Visitor Services staff collaborated with Bristol colleagues to devise and deliver training around RAMM's Meeting Place of Ideas - to refresh all teams' skills and confidence in tackling contentious histories with the public.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

- 34 RAMM staff have to date signed up for Carbon Literacy training; 21 have already been trained.
- The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme-funded heat pump scheme is now at control point two and detailed survey work is being carried out. Condition of the existing mechanical and electrical equipment pertaining to air handling units is currently being assessed.
- After six months of dynamic energy management and equipment troubleshooting across RAMM, the M&E consultant's first report was received in February, demonstrating an ongoing KWH saving for the first six month period equivalent to over £45,000. RAMM's building management system requires active monitoring and intervention to maintain performance and deliver this saving in future. Work is ongoing; consulting closely with

conservation staff, our consultant has identified additional measures that are expected to achieve further reductions in RAMM's overall energy consumption in the next year.

## **Dynamism**

- Museum's management team attended an externally-facilitated workshop on the topic of co-leadership

## **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.