

**Title of Update: RAMM Quarterly Highlights Report – Q1**

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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)**

- In June, the popular Fly on the Wall (Insects) and In Fine Feather (Birds) galleries were reopened to the public after their closure in connection with the essential roof works enabled by MEND fund.
- RAMM's visitor service officer travelled to Bristol and met with their counterpart at Bristol museums trust. Sharing best practice with an emphasis on community focus and customers' needs.
- Donations for the museum increased 13% with a targeted approach to actively engage more visitors and promoting digital giving verbally.
- Six key staff received formal BSL training in conversational sign language, supporting accessibility at the museum.

- Representatives of the team received Time Odyssey training to support the growth of the programme, following hugely positive demand in the programme.

### **Exhibitions and Events (Activity 2)**

- In June, RAMM opened its summer exhibition 'Are We Nearly There Yet?: A History of Transport'. This exhibition explores how transport has developed over the centuries and the people and events which have shaped it, told through objects in RAMM's collections, from a sled used on Scott's last Antarctic expedition to parachute material which played a crucial role in NASA's 2020 Mars mission, as well as travelling outfits, artworks, vehicles and transport ephemera.
- Through loans, items from RAMM's collection have been seen by thousands of visitors in other UK cities. In May RAMM's well-known 'Portrait of a Man in a Red Suit' returned from an extended loan to major exhibitions at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and Royal Academy, London.
- Also in May, RAMM loaned Sickert's 'Le lit de cuivre' to Sotheby's exhibition 'London: An Artistic Crossroads'. Inspired by the National Gallery's Bicentenary celebrations, it brings together masterpieces by international artists from regional museums across the UK, in one room, in the capital city, as an homage to London and to all those who came to be inspired, create and flourish.
- We held 'The past and future of transport and travel' event which saw a myriad of academics from the University of Exeter to talk about their various research projects.
- During Pride at the beginning of May and the Respect Festival in June, our owl and butterfly fluttered and swooped to woo the crowds and draw attention to the giant butterfly sculptures that the audience helped create in the Courtyard.

### **Digital (Activity 3)**

- Due to the success of RAMM's AHRC-funded Open Access project, GLAM-E Lab, follow-on funding has been agreed that will extend the project to July 2025. The next phase of work extends open access principles to smaller and grass roots organisations in the South West.
- In June, the GLAM-E Lab White Paper was released on the project website. It is aimed at guiding organisations through the process of going open access, providing hints, tips and lessons learned from RAMM's pilot project.

### **Contemporary Art (Activity 4)**

- Intensive work is now underway in developing two new artists commissions for inclusion in RAMM's autumn exhibition 'Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape'. These are from internationally renowned artist Alex Hartley and filmmaker Ashish Ghadiali whose work is inspired by RAMM's Dartmoor-related collections.
- In April RAMM welcomed contemporary artist Charmaine Watkiss for a tour of the museum. She will be one of the upcoming commissions in RAMM's contemporary art programme.
- Continuing their presence in the museum are two earlier RAMM commissions Ashanti Hare's 'River that never rests' is being shown in the Courtyard gallery along with objects from RAMM's collection that inspired it and 'The Silver Wave' by Michelle Williams Gamaker is in World Cultures (Americas).

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

- Launched Time Odyssey, a partnership between Art Explora, the British Museum, York Museums, Tyne & Wear Museums and RAMM. This major new national learning programme is an interactive gamified learning experience designed for

KS2 students, using augmented reality technology on tablets. It is primarily aimed at schools which are isolated either by their rurality or by limited transport options or have a high pupil premium that ranks highly on the indices of deprivation. Schools can apply for travel funding up to a maximum of £500. Places sold out within 24 hours of going live.

- The Dartmoor Frame of Mind project saw 36 young Devonians aged 12 – 18 take part in four photography nature walks on Dartmoor, led by artist and professional photographer Jo Bradford. The young people stepped out of their comfort zone by travelling together by train to the start of their walk on the edge of Dartmoor to learn and practice taking nature photos on their smartphone or tablet in a relaxed and supportive peer group. A selection of their photos will be showcased in a café display in the autumn.
- Our ‘Musical Moments Around the World’ sessions for Under 5s kicked off at the end of April and draws in groups with young children to discover instruments and musical styles from around the world.
- The Easter Holidays saw children taking part in print inspired activities such as comic designing, collaging and finger printing.
- May Half terms saw nearly 140 children making a Hamsa hands out of clay on the first day, families creating their own Magic Lantern slides, which they then saw projected onto a screen using one of RAMM’s lanterns and on the Thursday donning their favourite attire from our costume collections of Tudors, Romans or Victorians.
- The last two weekends of June saw families come to our Train and Track days where the Whipton Community Association took over the Courtyard and lay out an enormous toy railway for kids to play on.

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

- RAMM provided craft activities for young children alongside Beacon Centre free Easter holiday lunches in an underrepresented neighbourhood. Families were very engaged, spoke about wanting more accessible creativity for their children, and described barriers of cost, transport, disability and anxiety. These conversations back up other consultation feedback from this audience.
- Printmaking craft activity days kept families at the Beacon Centre and from lower-income communities in South Devon entertained and creative over the Easter holidays and offered something joyful for Young Carers.
- Drop-in activity during Pride festival to provide comfortable creative space for diverse audiences
- In partnership with craft practitioner Nick Mussell of Tanglewood Creations, RAMM offered hands-on metal casting workshops inspired by objects in the galleries to a variety of audiences, including people over 50 experiencing wellbeing issues, home educators, and refugees. Another group – teens with adults – signed up for the activity as a bonding experience. This built on RAMM’s growing popularity with home ed and neurodivergent families.

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

- One student completed a paid Student Business Placement from the University of Exeter, focusing on Marketing.
- Two students completed a paid student research placement from the University of Exeter, focusing on Amazon collections research.
- Four students completed an unpaid placement in Engagement, Accessibility and Collections work.
- Nine people joined the Future Skills programme.

- One student completed a paid Pathways to Arts and Culture Placement from the University of Exeter.
- One of RAMM's recent student placements, Laurel Brock won the community award at the University of Exeter Employment Awards for her work at RAMM. Laurel worked on the archaeological collection and access resources as well as our schools learning programme.

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

- Completed four introductory sessions with Hikmat service users (concluded April). These will inform future work with this group.
- Commissioned artist Simon Lee Dicker to deliver 6 further sessions (in autumn '24) with Hikmat service users, focussed on the theme of food. They will collaborate on creative outcomes including ceramic pieces inspired by food related objects from RAMM's collections and exploring the links between food, place and memory.

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

- Completed a series of 4 workshops with University of Exeter, Exeter Science Centre and community groups from across Exeter. Five university students shared their work as part of the sessions.
- Comments from the community groups were collated and presented as an animation, created by animator Molly Saunders, as part of the Transport exhibition.
- Two University of Exeter student projects are also incorporated into the Transport exhibition.

## **Investment principles plan**

### **Ambition & Quality**

- The Insights Report for the Ashanti Hare commission (2023-24 Q4) considered as part of an evening of contemporary dance scored over 85 for Curiosity, Thought Provoking and Cultural Contribution.
- The Insights Report for a series of creative transport workshops, part of the co-creation process for Are We Nearly There Yet? exhibition, scored 84 for Local Impact. 88% of participants rated the experience in the workshops as good or excellent.
- Regular mentoring enquiries on dementia-friendly programme from care sector around the country and museums around the world, eg Taiwan.
- The architects of Dartmoor Frame of Mind – RAMM engagement officer, photographer, youth arts therapy director – were nominated as Creative Heroes in DAISI arts education initiatives.

### **Inclusivity & Relevance**

- RAMM's engagement officer met with colleagues from Bristol museums for knowledge share relating to RAMM's Out and About LGBTQ+ project, to inform a similar project at Bristol.
- RAMM's volunteer engagement lead shared learning with the National Trust's UK volunteering manager responsible for updating the NT's volunteering strategy to increase diversity of their volunteers. They were particularly interested in how RAMM has been attracting younger volunteers.
- RAMM attended Exeter's annual celebration of diversity, Respect, partnering with Hikmat migrant support group to provide conversation activities feeding into the

Food engagement project. RAMM provided costumed dancers to enliven the festival and invite diverse audiences to the museum.

- RAMM established a new internal accessibility champions group, to share learning and responsibility across teams.
- Shared museum mindfulness activities with colleagues in Exeter City Council through free mindfulness sessions inspired by the museum collections.
- Presented to local history teachers about online resources on Devon's connections with the transatlantic slave trade
- Carried out a social media campaign during Refugee Week, aimed at making all audiences feel welcome at RAMM.
- RAMM's previous experience with community-based social prescribing maintains a legacy through frequent cross-posting and communication with the Wellbeing Exeter network.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

- RAMM celebrates 10 years of sustained carbon reduction.
- Environmental forum for action - A new staff forum, sharing knowledge, pledges and plans, a team of climate champions.

### **Dynamism**

- Fundraising campaign for RAMM's Dartmoor inspired programme wrapped up – securing £43k and bringing new financial supporters into RAMM.
- 2023/24 saw the highest level of donations since records were started except for the Seaton Down Hoard year. Although lower-level giving was down through the donation boxes, this was achieved through strong fundraising campaigns including saving a rare Anglo-Saxon gold ring for the Exeter collection and Dartmoor.
- RAMM 'food' a 'craft' fundraising campaigns in development.
- Fundraising Landscape session held between the Development Team and CoLT and priorities established.
- Co-leadership team meeting monthly to develop strategic planning.

## **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.