

BEYOND THE BINARY: GENDER, SEXUALITY & POWER

FAQs and Further Reading

ABOUT PITT RIVERS' INVOLVEMENT

Why is Pitt Rivers Museum – a museum of archaeology and anthropology – putting on an exhibition about transgender issues?

The exhibition has a lot of content about trans issues because the trans community have been key partners for several years. The Museum regularly displays exhibitions on issues relevant to local communities and to our wider visitor audience. We're proud to have worked with trans community members to develop this exhibition. It is an exhibition that explores binary and non-binary identities across the LGBTQIA+ community.

Why is the Museum doing this exhibition now?

We've been in discussion with LGBTQIA+ community members since 2016, so the exhibition has been planned for some time. We are able to display this now with the Museum finally re-opened to the public.

Why does the Museum think it can speak on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ community?

The Museum specifically worked with members of the community, so their personal experiences could be communicated. *The Beyond the Binary* exhibition is a space for people to speak for themselves – writing their own exhibition text and curating their own events.

How can Pitt Rivers Museum properly represent such a broad community?

The Museum is not trying to represent this community but is making space for the people we have worked with to represent themselves. The Museum would never suggest it could represent one community. The people we have worked with represent only themselves and their own experiences, rather than representing an entire community. However, the Museum is creating space for a diversity of stories by working with members of the local and international LGBTQIA+ to develop this display.

Is the Museum 'jumping on the bandwagon' to cover trans issues?

The Museum displays cover topics of relevance to originating communities and visitors. While this is a very topical issue, Pitt Rivers Museum has been working on this display for many years and has been part of the Museum's long-term plans, starting with the 2016 project *Out in Oxford*.

Is Pitt Rivers Museum trying to push the trans agenda?

No, the Museum is not trying to push a trans agenda. The Museum offers a space where different views can be presented. The Museum is standing proudly as a trans ally.

Why would we make time/space for such a niche community?

It's important for museums to make space for all communities, whatever their size. Statistics show that communities that live beyond the binaries of male/female, straight/gay, victor/victim are much larger than many people often assume. The museum collections can be used to show and communicate this, as the exhibition shows.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION CONTENT

Is this exhibition appropriate for children?

We believe the content is appropriate for children but as always judgement lies with the child's accompanying parent or carer. There are no images of nudity in the exhibition. There is some text of a sexual nature and the content is LGBTQIA+ focused. In the library section, there are children's books that discuss LGBTQ+ experiences in a child friendly, accessible way.

Is there any sensitive material in this exhibition?

There are no images of nudity in the exhibition. There is some text of a sexual nature and the content is LGBTQIA+ focused. The display does tell personal stories that some may find upsetting and/or triggering.

I find this exhibition offensive / in bad taste?

We're sorry you've found the exhibition offensive. Most visitors have had very positive reactions to the exhibition. We appreciate the exhibition may not be for everyone.

Is this the first museum exhibition about transgender issues?

There have been many museums who have explored LGBTQ+ themes. These include:

[The Museum of Transology Exhibition](#) Brighton Museums (2017/18)

[Transmission](#) Amsterdam Museum (2016)

[Queer and Now](#) Tate Britain (2018)

[TransAmerica/n: Gender, Identity, Appearance Today](#) at McNay Museum, USA (2018)

I find the language used in the exhibition – like TERF or queer – offensive or inflammatory.

We worked with members of the community to develop this exhibition. They have used the language they preferred to best express their experience. We recognize that language is constantly evolving. The intention of the exhibition was not to offend.

This exhibition makes me feel that the museum is not a safe space.

The museum aims to create a social space. Because the museum is a space for debate and ideas it is not a neutral space. A main aim behind this exhibition has been to create a supportive space in which LGBTQIA+ partners can feel represented and safe by expressing themselves and communicating their experiences to a wider audience.

What expertise was brought to this exhibition?

This exhibition was developed by members of the LGBTQIA+ community and represents their lived experience. The people that created this exhibition are the experts in their own lived experiences and have worked with areas of the museum collections that connect to the stories they want to tell.

TRANS CRITICISM

This exhibition is anti-woman.

Supporting the trans community does not mean taking an anti-woman stance. We support women and we support trans communities. We believe that it is an individual's right to self-identify and a trans woman is recognized by the museum and in our spaces as a woman.

This exhibition is anti-biology.

The exhibition makes very little mention of debates of biological sex but focuses on the lived experience of people who identify as non-binary or transgender.

FURTHER INFORMATION & READING

What is the University's position on trans?

From Oxford University Transgender policy (First published 2013; revised 2020)

<https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/transgender-policy>

The University aims to provide support and understanding to those individuals who wish to take, or have taken, steps to change the gender identity they were assigned at birth. The University aims to create an inclusive trans-friendly culture, workplace and learning environment, free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation, where all transgender people are treated with dignity and respect.

No member of the University community, its visitors or contractors should be treated less favourably, whether before, during or after their study or employment at, or their visit to, the University of Oxford on the grounds of gender identity or reassignment.

Oxford University Equality & Diversity policy 2020

The University of Oxford is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. We recognise that the broad range of experiences that a diverse staff and student body brings strengthens our research and enhances our teaching, and that in order for Oxford to remain a world-leading institution we must continue to provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish.

<https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/equalitypolicy.pdf>

Other useful links

Pitt Rivers website

www.prm.ox.ac.uk

Stonewall UK

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Pitt Rivers Beyond the Binary website <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/beyond-the-binary>