

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Pitt Rivers Museum wins DCMS/Wolfson Funding for *Engaging the Senses* Project**

The Pitt Rivers Museum is delighted to have been awarded £70,500 in the latest round of DCMS/Wolfson funding awards, aimed at helping museums increase access to their collections.

This award will fund *Engaging the Senses: Activating the Pitt Rivers Museum's Photograph and Sound Collections through digital audio-visual technology*. This project will improve visitors' engagement and introduce elements of digital exploration and learning in the galleries for a variety of audiences. A digital interactive table top, listening station and interactive screen will display unique photographs and sound collections, improving the visitor experience for visitors with disabilities, local communities and the wider public.

In 2018 the Pitt Rivers Museum welcomed a record 502,000 visitors. These new audio-visual elements will allow the growing number of visitors to not only see the objects that are on display but also search the Museum's digital collections, hear unique historical field recordings, and view film footage and photographs from around the world.

Welcoming news of the award, Dr. Laura Van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, said:

*'We are very grateful to DCMS/Wolfson for this opportunity to allow our visitors to access the full breadth and depth of the collections, now also giving access to unique sound recordings, photography and film. The project will allow us to show many more fascinating historical and cultural facets of the collection.'*

The Pitt Rivers Museum has just recently launched a new website with a wealth of information to enhance the visitor experience but also wants to bring new material into the Victorian age space of the Museum itself. The challenge of *Engaging the Senses* will be to sensitively show and share the unique material in the photo, film and sound collections without distracting from the objects on display. Curator of Photograph Collections, Dr Chris Morton said:

*'This very welcome funding will bring collections such as the fabulous travel photographs of Sir Wilfred Thesiger, author of 'Arabian Sands' and 'The Marsh Arabs, into the galleries for all our visitors to explore and enjoy, as well as the incredible collection of sound recordings of polyphonic singing made by Louis Sarno among the Bayaka of Central Africa. There is currently very little opportunity to show these collections to our visitors among the Museum's dense displays, but the sensitive use of digital interactive technology in the historic museum space will allow us to enhance the visitor experience considerably.'*

This award forms part of the latest round of DCMS/Wolfson funding in which thirty-five museums across the country will receive a share of £4 million to increase access to their collections. Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, Michael Ellis said:



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*“Our museums and galleries are among the best in the world and we are rightly proud of these institutions. The DCMS/Wolfson Fund demonstrates how the government and philanthropic organisations can work together to boost our museum sector.*

*We want people up and down the country to enjoy culture and heritage wherever they are. The 35 grants awarded today will make important contributions towards improving the visitor experience, ensuring our wonderful collections are open to as many people as possible.”*

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## Notes to Editors

### **About the Pitt Rivers Museum**

- The University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) is one of the finest archaeological and ethnographic teaching museums in the world. Founded in 1884, when General Pitt Rivers, an influential figure in the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology, donated his collection of more than 27,000 objects to the University of Oxford, it now stewards over 550,000 objects. These collections of historical, social and ritual significance are of an extraordinary range and depth, including great works of art, invention and design from around the world.
- The Museum carries out world-leading conservation and research and welcomes half a million visitors each year, and currently focuses on developing more socially engaged practice with a focus on inclusivity. The Pitt Rivers Museum is much loved for its characteristic multi-layered and dense displays. Today, the Museum is a dynamic, forward-looking institution with many connections to stakeholders throughout the world.
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### **About the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund**

This is the thirteenth round of a joint fund which DCMS runs in partnership with the Wolfson Foundation. The fund aims to provide capital funding for museums and galleries across England to deliver projects in one or a number of the following key areas:

- Material improvements to the display and interpretation of collections, in both permanent galleries and exhibition spaces.
- Improvements to access and/or interpretation for visitors with disabilities.
- Physical improvements to public spaces to enhance visitor experience.
- Improvements to environmental controls, collections storage and conservation facilities to enhance the care of collections.

### **About the Wolfson Foundation**

The Wolfson Foundation (<http://www.wolfson.org.uk>) is an independent charity that supports and promotes excellence in the fields of science, health, education and the arts and humanities, including the Wolfson History Prize, the UK's foremost history prize. Since it was established in 1955, over £900 million (£1.9 billion in real terms) has been awarded to more than 11,000 project throughout the UK, all on the basis of expert review.