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Members' news



Recreation of a Baroque feasting table, c.1650, conceived and made by Ivan Day with taxidermy by David Astley and seafood and fruit models by Tony Barton. Part of the Feast and Fast exhibition c. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

‘Opening the door much wider’ NLS plans to welcome families as part of five-year redevelopment

The National Library of Scotland has discussed its evolving plans for major transformation over five years with the *i paper*. These include adding new exhibition and public space, welcoming families and creating a livelier ethos as well as continuing to act as ‘memory of the nation’ - a place for academics, researchers and 31 million books. Chief Executive Dr John Scally said "*we need to open the door much wider, to let people in, and accept that people coming into the library might not necessarily be coming in to read a medieval manuscript, or even a book. They might be coming in to look at an electronic book, they might be coming in to meet their friends, have a coffee, see an exhibition or meet their book group.*" As well as creating five times the space open to the public, the Library's five year strategy 'Reaching People' will address the pressing need for digitisation as material held in old forms such as VHS and Betamax are likely to disintegrate entirely over the next decade. Interested parties are encouraged to contribute to the consultation which continues to 27th January . [i paper](#), [NLS](#) (draft strategy), [Scottish Government](#) (contribute to the consultation)

Marsupials to meteorites: NHM names 412 new species in the past year

Science writer Josh Davis wondered how many species the Natural History Museum names over the course of the year, and has compiled a list of 419 for 2019. These range from *Solanum medusae*, a lichen found in southern Brazilian cities, to the pig-footed bandicoot *Chaeropus yirratji* which has been extinct since the 50s as well as 350 living invertebrates, several deep sea worms, nine new classes of meteorite, a very small beetle now named after Greta Thunberg (*Nelloptodes gretae*) and fossil species including *Rhenopyrgus Viviani* which stood on the sea floor 435 million years ago. Documenting this variety feeds a crucial purpose at a time of declining biodiversity. Director of Science Tim Littlewood said *"learning how evolution has yielded new species able to live in earth's diverse habitats is awe inspiring. Sadly, much of that adaptation and biological diversity is now severely threatened and we are losing species faster than we can discover them. Greater awareness of what we're losing and what can yet be found will hopefully inspire action towards a planet that thrives with our help."* [NHM](#)

Also: As V&A continues to move its collections to East London, *The Guardian* has written about the perils of handling some of its more dangerous items – not just 'razor sharp samurai swords and lethal poison darts' but also a collection of early 20th century hats, many of which were treated with arsenic and mercury before the 1930s. [Guardian](#)

Images this month: Feast and Fast at the Fitzwilliam Museum

Images this month come from 'Feast and Fast: the art of food in Europe 1500 - 1800', showing at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge until 26th April. The exhibition features newly conserved material from the Fitzwilliam's collection plus four spectacular reconstructions, including a Jacobean sugar banquet and a European feasting table. For the duration of the exhibition, Bompas and Parr have also installed a four metre high pineapple on the lawn outside the museum. [Fitzwilliam Museum](#)

Policy planning for the 2020s

Bridging the West – East divide: Nick Serota discusses the forthcoming ACE ten-year plan

Sir Nicholas Serota has discussed ACE's forthcoming ten-year plan, highlighting some of its ambitions ahead of publication next month. He said that ACE would seek to support more artists, writers and composers with public money earlier in their careers, and bring more support to the Eastern seaboard of the country, adding *"frankly there has been more on the west side of the country than on the east, for various reasons. Manchester has been very successful. If you look up the east coast from the east Midlands to Newcastle ... there are a whole range of towns and cities which need further investment."* He is also keen for ACE to support libraries, and help them find a larger role in high streets and communities. He said that he thinks Prime Minister Boris Johnson understands the value of the arts, both in themselves and for what they can bring to communities. However, he added that Brexit would mean that culture would need to 'paddle harder' and pointed to the importance of continued ease of international exchange in artistic talent. [Guardian](#)

ACE to begin tracking socio-economic background in NPO reporting

This year, ACE will begin adding a question to NPO reporting aimed at tracing the socio-economic background of those working in the arts. This will sit alongside data it already collects on gender, ethnicity and disability to reveal how representative the sector is of the wider UK population. ACE's Deputy Director Simon Mellor said that there is *"a growing body of evidence that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented in publicly funded culture"*, and that collecting data is the first step towards addressing this. The question asked will be *"thinking back to when you were aged about 14, which best describes the sort of work the main/highest income earner in your household did in their main job?"* The results of the research will be published from 2021. ACE has also published a webinar, exploring issues faced by working class people in the arts world. [Guardian](#), [Museums Journal](#), [ACE](#) (webinar)

Scottish parliamentary inquiry recommends investing 1% of country's budget in the arts

The Scottish Parliament's first ever inquiry into the arts has recommended that Scotland should invest 1% of its annual £425bn national budget in arts work. It also highlighted underpayment of artists, falling Lottery funding and the fallout from Brexit as issues affecting the sector as it called for a radical overhaul. Creative Scotland, which distributes a majority of arts funding in the country has also recently been criticised, described by another Holyrood committee as 'well below' the standard for a public body. A spokesperson for the Government said that it would carefully consider the report and respond in due course. The Scottish Government will also shortly publish a Culture Strategy, which was initially due out last year, but has been delayed by the General Election. [Arts Professional](#), [BBC](#), [Scottish Parliament](#), [Arts Professional](#) (Scottish cultural strategy)

Museums for wellbeing



4m tall pineapple installed by Bompas and Parr outside the Fitzwilliam Museum for the duration of the Feast and Fast exhibition. c. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

14 year study links museum visits and other arts activities with significantly lower mortality

A UK study has tracked 6,710 adults over the age of 50 across a 14 year period and has discovered a significant link between taking part in arts activity or a museum visit and lower mortality, even when controlled for other factors such as income, education level and mobility. Visiting a museum or concert just once or twice a year is associated with a 14% decrease in mortality, rising to 31% for those visiting every month. Co-author Professor Andrew Steptoe from University College London theorised that arts-goers are more likely to be engaged with the world. He said "*we know that a sense of purpose in life is important. Being involved and excited by the arts keeps and maintains your purpose in life.*" The cause and effect loop - does wellbeing promote arts going, or arts going promote wellbeing? – may be operating in both directions: the study notes that arts are known to promote empathy, reduce loneliness and prevent people from becoming sedentary, all of which in turn increase longevity. [BMJ](#), [New York Times](#), [Evening Standard](#)

For arts' sake: podcast with museum people

The For Arts' sake podcast, which hosts conversations with museum people about their work, emphasising changes in the sector, has launched a second season. Topics include experience design with Alex Flowers, autism friendly museums with Clare Madge and historians Olivia Durrand and Paula Larsson exploring Oxford's uncomfortable and overlooked pasts – from the dark side of Alice in Wonderland to the invisibility of women and addressing colonialism. [FAS](#)

Funding

28 museums and libraries receive £2.1m from Designation Development Fund

ACE has announced the 28 museums and libraries that will receive a combined £2.1m in the third round of investment in the Designation Development Fund, covering the period 2019 – 2022. The fund develops the long term sustainability of excellent collections and helps to maximise their public value. Recipients include the Pitt Rivers Museum which receives £90k to conserve, research and digitise its textiles and clothing collections; Black Country Living Museum receives £65k for work on its packaging and advertising collections, including research and digitisation and Leeds Museums receives £90k to develop a framework of socially engaged narratives for its fine and decorative art collections at Temple Newsam. The project 'Grief, Joy and Togetherness' will take portraits in the house as a starting point to link objects with life stories. [ACE](#), [Yorkshire Castles & Gardens](#) (Temple Newsam), [M + H](#)

New two-tier system for Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund

New rounds of the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund (EFCF) which is administered by the MA, will now offer two tiers to grant applicants, to make it easier to shape bids aimed at making collections relevant to the public. These are:

- Collection innovation and engagement grants for bids up to £90k over two years
- Collections, strategy and development grants for bids up to £250k over less than five years, for work supporting an established strategy, leading to a long term benefit.

The fund recently awarded its 18th round, with £585k given to five organisations, including £114k to Fife Cultural Trust to review its internationally significant linoleum collection and £117k to Museums Northumberland to collect stories in support of future collections work. [Museums Journal](#)

Organisations of all sizes encouraged to apply for ARTIST ROOMS

Tate and National Galleries Scotland are seeking organisations across the UK interested in hosting touring exhibitions of national collections from the ARTIST ROOMS programme. Large and small organisations in towns, cities and rural communities are encouraged to apply. This year there will be more ways to borrow, from single exhibitions to multi-site tours, depending on individual needs. The whole collection consists of 1,600 modern and contemporary works, which have been presented by 85 organisations over the past decade, reaching 50 million people and offering learning opportunities for 600,000 young people. The deadline to submit the expression of interest form is this Friday, 10th January, however it takes only 3 – 5 minutes to complete. [NGS](#) (expression of interest form), [ARTIST ROOMS](#) (collection overview)

Also: The Government has announced that it will invest £80m during 2020 – 21 in creative education for young people, with the majority being spent on new Music Education Hubs. A slice of £4m shared between many agencies for 'other cultural education programmes' will support schemes for school trips to museums, but the exact sums for this work have not been announced. [M + H](#)

Round three opens of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

The third round of Scotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund is offering a share of £3m to rurally-based tourist attractions, which need help to cope with the effects of larger visitor numbers. The funds can be spent on items such as additional facilities, parking areas and recycling points. To date, 31 projects have received £6m from the scheme. [Scottish Government](#)

Army Museums Ogilby Trust grants

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust has opened applications for its annual project grants of up to £5k. These are available to all museums which are members of the Army Museums Network, with a deadline of 12 noon on 14th February. There are also £150 training grants, which can be applied for all year. [AMOT](#), [AMOT](#)

Government call for bids - International Programme in Russia

The FCO has announced a call for bids for work as part of its International Programme in Russia. The British Embassy in Moscow and Consulate General in Ekaterinburg are seeking to foster links between people and institutions on a wide range of topics, and promote collaboration, champion democracy and encourage business. Project topics may include:

- culture - including arts, literature, education and shared history
- environment, including the transition to the green economy and COP26
- science and innovation, including life science, global health and the Arctic
- human rights and civil society; business and trade; security challenges.

Initial bids should be in the range of £10k - £500k each year over a one to three year period. Interested parties should submit a Project Concept form by 1pm (MSK/UTC+3) on 20th January. [Gov.uk](#)

Events

2020 Working Internationally Conference: Soft Power in Turbulent Times

In 2019, the UK lost its top spot in the Soft Power Index, with the authors of the report pointing to Brexit and internal turbulence as relevant factors, but also highlighting its reputation for 'engagement, culture, education, and digital' as continuing strengths. As Brexit continues to unfold, the 2020 Working Internationally conference will look at the role museums and galleries can play in supporting the UK's soft power. Speakers include Dr Natalia Grincheva, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne and author of 'Global Trends in Museum Diplomacy and Museum Diplomacy in the Digital Age', Nick Marchand, Head of International, V&A and Terry Simiote an assistant curator at the Livingstone Museum, Zambia. Topics will include digital soft power, changes over the next decade and how soft power relates to restitution and decolonisation. Tickets are £79 or £49 for NMDC and ICOM UK members. The event takes place at Leeds Art Gallery on 12th March. [ICOM](#)

Connecting Communities through shared values in museum spaces

Happy Museum is running an event to explore how museums can help develop 'compassion, connection and community' through their programmes, combatting polarisation. It will draw examples from a year-long programme which ran at the Manchester Museum, describing changes that affected everything from volunteer programmes to dedicated exhibitions and social media campaigns. It will be led by Happy Museum's Hilary Jennings and Tom Compton of the Common Cause Foundation. The event takes place at the Museum of the Home on 7th February. Early bird tickets until 13th January are £92 (for small organisations) – or £194 (for larger ones). [Happy Museum](#)

Also: the Belgrade and New York-based Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development has published new research into the growth of polarisation across the globe, but especially in Western democracies: for example, antipathy between US Republicans and Democrats is estimated to have doubled over 20 years. After explaining some of the mechanisms driving

increased hostility, including the decline of information providers regarded as 'trusted neutrals', it describes de-escalation strategies including 'enhancing the strength of offline communities as spaces of diverse, facilitated discussion'. [CIRSD](#)

First events from the new Centre for Cultural Value

As we [reported last year](#), the University of Leeds is hosting a new Centre for Cultural Value, aimed to make academic work on culture more accessible and bridge the gap between theory and practice. It seeks to heavily involve people working in the cultural sector, and is now running three half day events in Cardiff (30th Jan), London (24th Jan) and Edinburgh (14th Feb) to discuss the shaping of the programme over the next five years. Tickets are free, but it is necessary to book. There are also five £50 travel bursaries for independent practitioners. [University of Leeds](#), [NMDC](#)

We make tomorrow: imagining the world of 2030

Julie's Bicycle is holding a one-day conference 'We make tomorrow: creative climate action in a time of crisis', bringing together policy makers, grassroots activists, the scientific community and cultural leaders. It will explore how creativity and cultural leadership can contribute ahead of the COP26 climate talks. It will look at the political, demographic, economic and social forces driving nature loss and how the cultural sector can shape the path to net zero. The event is supported by ACE and is in partnership with the Serpentine Galleries General Ecology Project. It takes place at the Royal Geographical Society on 26th February, with an audience of around 300. Tickets are £27 - £65. [Julie's Bicycle](#), [Serpentine Galleries](#)

Purposeful participation: 'what are you doing in the world that's so big you need more people?'

For the past year, the New Citizenship Project has been working with six organisations, including the Wellcome Collection, Royal Pavilion & Museums and The National Archives to explore what it means to think of people as participants in shaping cultural heritage. Although 'participation' is familiar in the sector, it's often carried out by specific teams and done 'for' people rather than with them. The project has developed a toolkit to allow organisations to empower people to genuinely change the society they live in, in ways that they wish. It also invites organisations to ask "*what are you doing in the world that's so big you need more people – and more diverse people – to help you do it?*" A Bootcamp event takes place in London (venue tba) on 29th January to teach these ideas. Tickets are £240. [New Citizenship Project](#), [Culture Hive](#)

Slave to the algorithm or escape to outer space? Future Fest returns for 2020

After a year off, Nesta's Future Fest returns for 2020, with a series of talks capturing possible futures in all their variety. Themed 'survival kit for the future' it nevertheless urges us to consider that 'the future is not something that happens to us, but something we can create'. Speakers include neuroscientist Anil Seth, physicist and wikipediaian Dr Jess Wade, MP David Lammy and comedian Josie Long. There are also experiences, ranging from 'Osmo', a chance to escape from digital in an 'inflatable infinity space that reproduces the cosmos' (using a space material developed by NASA) and 'Binaural Dinner' an interactive experience which explores what it takes to get to know a stranger. The event takes place on Tobacco Dock, London from 10am – 10pm on 20th March, with tickets from £25 (evening only) - £80. [Nesta](#), [Nesta](#) (blog)

Also: a complete list of Nesta's forthcoming talks is also available here. [Nesta](#)

Museums and contemporary craft

The National Museum of Scotland is hosting a one-day symposium on Museums and Contemporary Craft. It will bring together archaeologists, curators and conservators with contemporary craft artists to consider how collaboration can help re-evaluate the past. Participants include silversmith Simone ten Hompel who has been working in responses to NMS's early medieval collections. The event takes place at NMS on 5th March. Tickets are £20 or £16 for concessions. [NMS](#)

The era of reclamation: Bonnie Greer in conversation with June Sarpong begins new BM event season

Playwright, novelist and former British Museum trustee Bonnie Greer joins writer, campaigner and BBC Head of Creative Diversity June Sarpong to discuss the controversies and debates facing public organisations in the 21st century. These include achieving greater workforce diversity and the need to develop creative talent that better reflects the nation. The event is the first in the series 'The Era of Reclamation' which runs at the BM throughout January and February, curated by Greer. The first talk takes place on 24th January from 6.30pm; tickets are £12 or £5 for concessions. [British Museum](#)

Data for.... Series of workshops, covering topics from marketing to relationship management

The Audience Agency is running a series of one day workshops, focusing on how to use data in the cultural sector for a variety of purposes. Topics include data for managing relationships, marketing, touring, decision making and evaluation. There is also a beginner's introduction to data. Each course explains how sound evidence can be used to tell compelling stories, get better returns and serve stakeholders and audiences more effectively. The workshops take place in London, Manchester, Doncaster and Cardiff from January to April. Ticket prices range from £80 - £160, with the option to bring a second person at half price. [Audience Agency](#)

Taking the long view: the future of gallery and visual arts education

The gallery education charities Engage and Engage Scotland are offering a three-day course for mid-career professionals to take a 30-year-long view of the future of gallery education. It asks whether there is an activist role for gallery education, with topics ranging from workforce diversity and community inclusion and the big background picture – from climate to financial pressures. Participants are invited to present an activity or workshop themselves as part of the course. The event takes place on 24th – 26th March at various Dundee venues including V&A Dundee. Tickets are £100 – £300, depending on personal or organisational booking and Engage membership status. [Engage](#)

Museum iD Study Days: from podcasting to community led interpretation

Museum iD has launched its spring programme of study days to be held at National Gallery X, the Wellcome Trust and Museum of London. The series focuses partly on digital – including a guide to podcasting and designing museum experiences in a digital age – and partly on community-led work, from interpretation to queer programming. Further study days will be announced soon. Tickets are £177 with discounts for group bookings. [Museum iD](#), [National Gallery X](#)

Remix 2020 summit brings together culture with technology and entrepreneurship

Remix London 2020 is a two-day conference covering the intersection between culture, technology and entrepreneurship. Speakers include Honor Harger of the ArtScience Museum Singapore on museums and planetary wellbeing; Clive Humby, creator of the Tesco Clubcard on loyalty and data-driven innovation; Stella Kanu, founder of Black Women in Theatre; Luisella Mazza, Head of Global Programmes at the Google Cultural Institute; and Maria Adebowale-Schwarte, Executive Director of the Foundation for Future London, on place-led prosperity, green spaces and cross-sector collaboration. The event takes place on 27th - 28th January at the Royal Opera House and Royal Academy of Arts. Tickets are £530 for two days without lunch or £560 with, or around £360 for a single day. However readers of this newsletter can get a 25% reduction by entering NMDC25 at the checkout. [Remix London](#)

Surveys

IFACCA seeks global snapshot of culture in the digital age

The International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA) is conducting a global survey, exploring how digital technologies are used in cultural work, and the opportunities and challenges – including around government funding and policy making. It will use the results to inform a report for arts councils and similar agencies across the world. [IFACCA](#)

Appointments and Honours



Recreation of an English confectioner's shop window, c.1790, conceived and made by Ivan Day. c. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

René Olivieri has been appointed as temporary Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund for a period of six months to June. He replaces Sir Peter Luff who stood down early due to illness. Gov.uk

Nicky Morgan, who stood down as an MP before the General Election, retains her post as Culture Secretary from the House of Lords after becoming a life peer. [Guardian](#), [Telegraph](#), [The Art Newspaper](#)

Tracy Brabin MP replaces Tom Watson, who resigned before the General Election, as Shadow Culture Secretary. [Evening Standard](#)

Dr Kevin Fewster, who stepped down as Director of Royal Museums Greenwich in 2019 has received a CBE for services to Museums and to Maritime History. [Evening Standard](#)

Ann Gallagher, former Director of Collection, British art at Tate has received an OBE in the New Year honours. [Arts Professional](#) (complete list of cultural sector honours)

Philanthropy

Study suggests that thankyou calls don't make a difference to charitable donations

A recent US-based study randomised half a million donors who had recently given to non-profit organisations, to either receive a thankyou call, or no further contact after making a gift. The calls were personal, emphasised the value of the gift and did ask for further funds. The study surprisingly found that there was no difference between subsequent giving between the two groups, although when asked, donors say thankyou calls make them more likely to give in future. Study leader Anya Samek from the University of Southern California comments that "*charities might wish to make calls out of a belief that making them is the right thing to do. In that case, I can see a rationale for them to stick with this tradition.*" [The Conversation](#)

Tracking changes in attitude to philanthropy among very wealthy millennials

An intergenerational transfer of very large fortunes is underway, with billionaire philanthropists leaving their estates to millennials (broadly, those under 45). However, Michelle Wright of Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy writes that their preoccupations and ways of operating can be very different from baby boomers, and that this may cause a decline in cultural giving unless institutions adapt. Typically, the arts is the second most important issue (after education) for ultra-wealthy over 65s. For millennials, it is much further down the list, after animal welfare, the environment and social activism. Millennials are also more likely to be hands-on and devote themselves to a single cause (such as the group of five heirs to a wealthy Asian family who announced in September 2019 that they would be focusing solely on pollution). In the UK, philanthropy has remained static for a decade and Wright suggests the field needs a 'revolution, not evolution' in approach. However, the pattern is global: a recent report from Philanthropy Australia suggest "*what Millennials do not value they will not protect, and what they do not protect they risk losing for generations to come.*" [Arts Professional](#)

Museum openings and closings

Migration Museum finds new home at Lewisham shopping centre

After a two-and-a-half year residency at a temporary venue in Lambeth, the Migration Museum is moving to a new venue in the heart of Lewisham Shopping Centre, where it will open in early February. Opening hours are yet to be confirmed, but are likely to be around five days per week. There will be dedicated event and education space, as well as room for multiple exhibitions. Its programme begins with a restaging of the immersive exhibition [Room to Breathe](#) and photography show 'Humanae'. From April, the new exhibition 'Departures' will explore 400 years of British emigration stories, linking with the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower. The Migration Museum's unique site, in what was formerly, a branch of H&M will also allow it to reach a wide audience. Head of Communications Matthew Plowright said "*a shopping centre is a space that attracts visitors from a wide range of ages, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Being based at the heart of a busy shopping centre therefore has the potential to make what we do accessible to all, breaking down the perceived and real barriers to entry to museums and cultural institutions that some people encounter.*" [Migration Museum](#)

This year's museum and gallery openings in brief

A number of UK museums and galleries are reopening this year after major work; there are also landmark new museums opening internationally. These include:

- The Box in Plymouth, Devon, reopening as a new cultural hub, including a museum telling local stories and an archive of the maritime heritage of the city.
- Bodmin Jail in Cornwall has been extensively renovated, including a new 'Dark Walk' immersive experience, looking at prison life in the 18th and 19th century.
- Dorset County Museum reopens with extended galleries this summer, with displays including a 140 million year old crocodile skull (aka the 'Swanage Snapper') and Thomas Hardy's notebooks.
- Derby Silk Mill: Museum of Making opens this autumn, with objects including a Rolls Royce engine and items from railway and gaming history.
- As we [reported last month](#), the Geffrye Museum is reopening this year as Museum of the Home.

- The landmark Humboldt Forum in Berlin will open in stages from December. Other major international openings include University of Melbourne Science Gallery, the New Museum for Western Australia, and Oslo's Munch Museum ('one of the world's largest cultural attractions dedicated to a single artist').
- The Grand Egyptian Museum opens in Cairo late in the year. First announced in 1992, it will house 100,000 artefacts, from prehistory to the Graeco-Roman period, including 5,400 objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun. The site is described as 'bigger than Vatican City' and also includes shops, restaurants and a conference space.
- In line with a growing trend to make stored collections accessible to the public, the Boijmans Museum in Rotterdam is completing an €85m mirror-fronted egg-shaped collections centre, with tours beginning this year.

[M + H](#) (mostly major international openings), [Guardian](#), [The Art Newspaper](#) (photography museum), [The Art Newspaper](#) (international openings), [Humboldt Forum](#), [Guardian](#) (Grand Egyptian Museum), [The Art Newspaper](#) (Boijmans Museum)

Also: There is also a run down of 2020 art shows, from Titian to Alice in Wonderland from the [BBC](#) and [The Art Newspaper](#).

Lowewood Museum faces closure after breakdown of agreement between two Councils

Lowewood Museum is based in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire and tells the story of the borough's history, with a collection including geology, archaeology, social history, costume, photography and art. However, it now seems likely to close following a breakdown of the arrangement between Broxbourne Borough Council and Epping Forest District Council which previously sustained it. The museum has a campaigning Friends group, which has launched a petition and is working with local schools, businesses and heritage groups; there will be a further public meeting about its future in January. However, the Friends group has turned down an approach by Broxbourne Borough Council to run the place as volunteers. One of its members told *Museums Journal* "asking a group of untrained, mainly older volunteers to run what should be a professional service – it was not an option". Current Friends Chair Pat Styles said "we hope to succeed but it is not going to be easy. As chairman of the Friends and a volunteer who knows the collection inside out and the importance of it to the borough, I am saddened that this council cannot see this and cares so little about its heritage." [Museums Journal](#), [Lowewood Museum](#), [Hertfordshire Mercury](#)

Manchester announces Bury as its first ever Town of Culture

Bury has been announced as the first Town of Culture in the Greater Manchester area, by Mayor Andy Burnham. The win, which was announced at the Fusilier Museum, comes with £120k to drive 'bursts of creativity' as well as tourism, the night time economy and regeneration. There will be an emphasis on comedy, in part inspired by the town's most famous daughter, Victoria Wood. Burnham said he would also be using his 'contact book' to focus some big cultural organisations on Bury: "The Halle have already said they're ready to come here and put on some events here. The Royal Exchange I'm sure will be the same. We've got sway over big cultural organisations and the whole idea is to get them using their power in towns like this as well." [Manchester Evening News](#), [Bury Times](#)

Royal Cornwall Museum closes for eight months to modernise and build public programme

The Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro will close for eight months from 12th January with the loss of eight posts, a decision driven by declining income levels and low audience numbers. Museum Chair Julie Seyler said the 'difficult and painful' choice had been taken because the museum has reached a tipping point and needs to reboot, with changes ranging from fixing the roof to prevent collection damage, to building a more relevant public programme, and consulting with former staff, volunteers and the public on future changes. During this period, it will remain open to school and research visits. The museum is run by an independent charitable trust and is responsible for generating its own income. However, Cornwall Museums Partnership will support its business model review. [Royal Cornwall Museum](#), [Museums Journal](#), [Cornwall Live](#)

Looking back, looking forwards



Gustus; Le Goust (Taste), from Les Cinq Sens (The Five Senses) Abraham Bosse (1602–76), published by Melchior Tavernier (c.1564–1641), France, c.1638. c. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Nesta's 2020 predictions: from preventing 'digital assassination' to a move away from rote learning

Nesta has made its annual predictions of what the future will hold in ten short essays, concentrating some of the most salient topics of our times – from digital to drone technology, the changing face of democracy and climate change. Predictions most relevant to the cultural sector include:

- A move away from learning by rote in UK schools. An international survey shows that UK schools are the third most likely to use rote learning and 'teaching the test' among OECD countries. Meanwhile China and Japan, which used to favour this method are moving towards prioritising collaboration, creative and critical thinking and are attaining better results as they do so. Nesta argues that the recent Durham Commission report points a way to the UK catching up with the trend, adding "*without urgent action, the country will have a growing number of young people who are unable to compete in the fast-changing global economy, and without the skills demanded most by employers. This cannot be an option and in 2020 we must see change.*"
- As the lives of individuals and organisations become 'entirely stored on the internet' the risk of 'digital assassination' increases: especially as people rely on key personal information such as telephone numbers and date of birth to identify themselves. Nesta suggests that insurance against digital assassination will become routine, with trade-offs which may include swapping convenience for additional protection, such as using a physical authentication USB key to log in to accounts.
- A third of people surveyed said they felt eco-anxiety in 2019: for example, a paper advising that populations should resign themselves to social collapse as a 'deep adaptation' went viral and was downloaded 100,000 times. Nesta suggests that these feelings can be channelled into positive action, from the 'voluntary simplicity movement' to participatory futures projects – an approach

which asks people to imagine the future they want, and then begin to create it.

Other predictions include the tipping point for the end of cash, the rise of digitally-savvy trade unions and the replacement of fireworks (used for entertainment since Elizabeth I) with drones. Skewering the border between the absurd and dystopian, Nesta also suggests that as surveillance societies attempt to identify individuals by their gait, there may be an outbreak of [Monty Python style silly walks](#), from people seeking to outwit technology. [Nesta](#), [NMDC](#) (Durham Commission report synopsis)

Reviews of 2019

- *The Art Newspaper* has taken a highly compressed look back at the year, picking out significant events such as the Notre Dame fire and Leonardo 500, but also recurring issues that will continue to shape the 20s: climate change, cultural funding and activism against some funders, restitution (the Art Newspaper comments that 'so far there has been little action – but the issue will not go away'), the presentation of ethnographic collections and destruction of cultural property. It also notes the effect of migration and sexual harassment stories in the art world.
- *Museums + Heritage* points to the remarkable success of the National Trust in 2018 – 19, in which it spent £148m on conservation and grew its membership by 400,000 to 5.6 million. Other positive stories include the popularity of arts installations in cathedrals and the thriving of *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* at V&A, which sold out for its whole five month run and then extended for seven weeks.
- Meanwhile, with an eye largely to broadcast, *The Guardian's* Simon Reynolds makes the point that the number of streaming platforms means there are 'fewer household names, more cult figures' as there are so many different cultural paths now available. [The Art Newspaper](#), [Guardian](#), [M + H](#)

2020 anniversaries and year themes

- Bishop Thomas Becket's murder in Canterbury Cathedral in December 1170, created a social, political and cultural outpouring that still resonates 850 years later. The British Museum's Becket 2020 includes an exhibition and commemorative events from October. It will show 100 objects associated with the archbishop including manuscripts, jewellery and sculpture. [Guardian](#), [British Museum](#)
- 2020 also marks 500 years since the death of Raphael, with V&A and the National Gallery likely to run related events. [The Art Newspaper](#)
- This year is Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters and many museums and galleries will be taking part, and programming in response to the theme. Scottish museums can still apply to be included in the programme. [MGS blog](#)
- Programming is well underway for commemorations of 400 years since the sailing of the Mayflower on 16th September 1620, with events planned from Plymouth to the Migration Museum. [Mayflower 400](#)
- The England's Creative Coast initiative will bring art commissions to the South East coastline, with support from seaside town art galleries, from the Towner to Hastings Contemporary. [M + H](#)

Education

Plans underway for a new Natural History GCSE

The *i* paper reports that an exam board is working on proposals for a Natural History GCSE, aimed at restoring a knowledge of the natural world among teenagers, in a society which has become 'much more urban, much more indoors'. The proposal has attracted cross-party interest: originally suggested by nature writer Mary Colwell and supported by Green Party MP Caroline Lucas, it also attracted sympathy from Michael Gove when he was Environment Secretary. The *i* paper reports "exam sector figures think the current political situation is more favourable for the launch of a new GCSE than at any point in recent years". This is an area where museums can bring plentiful resources to education: from research by scientists at institutions including NHM and the Horniman to public galleries, for example the Oxford University Museum of Natural History's new work to link its large historic entomology collections with modern issues of biodiversity and habitat loss. [i paper](#), [Oxford University Museum of Natural History](#)

Tate calls for more emphasis on visual arts education in state schools

Tate and its associated collaboration network, Plus Tate, have called for greater opportunities for visual arts learning in English state schools. Tate Director Maria Balshaw said “*access to the visual arts in this country must not depend on social and economic advantage... We need a level cultural playing field for all children because we want and need visually literate adults. There should be fair access to arts in line with the offer to pupils in Scotland and Wales where the arts are already a core commitment.*” Her comments come as Steve McQueen’s ‘Year 3’ project continues, which photographed a majority of London schoolchildren in that year at 1,504 schools, for display at Tate and on city billboards. 600 schoolchildren each day have visited the gallery for associated activity. Meanwhile, the recent Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement research project, with Tate and the RSC recommended that arts should have parity with other subjects at Key Stage 3. [M + H](#), [Plus Tate](#)

Awards

Art Fund launches search for Museum of the Year 2020

The Art Fund has launched its search for Museum of the Year 2020. The sector’s most generous prize offers £100k to the winner and £10k to every finalist. It is open to museums which have made transformative change over the previous year, which may range from an event and exhibition programme, to attracting new audiences through digital, inclusion work or any approach involving ‘doing things differently and making bold choices’. Last year’s winner was St Fagans National Museum of History, described by judges as a ‘monument to modern museum democracy’. It completed a redevelopment in 2018 including new buildings and workshops. This year’s deadline for application is noon on 13th February 2020; a winner will be announced in April. [Art Fund](#), [Art Fund](#) (previous winners)

Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries help people from wider socio-economic groups access a career in the arts

Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries support the careers of people from socio-economic groups under-represented in the cultural sector. A new round is opening for 2020 – 2022, and the scheme is seeking cultural spaces which would like to act as hosts and partners in developing a Fellow’s career, whether as curator or creative within an organisation. In total, the scheme will be creating 50 paid, year-long Creative Fellowships and will enable host organisations to take part in an 18 month organisational change programme. Hosts will pay 25 – 35% of the Fellow’s salary, will become part of a network aimed at making lasting change and should commit a senior staff member to engage with the programme. After Fellows have been recruited, they will begin in post from September 2020. Organisations of all sizes are encouraged to apply; the deadline is 30th January. [Weston Jerwood](#)

EMYA longlist gives overview of new developments in European museums

Three UK museums have entered European Museum of the Year 2020: V&A Dundee, The National Museum of Scotland and St Fagan’s National Museum of History in Wales. The award is open to museums which have opened or undergone substantial refurbishment in the last three years, so the longlist gives an interesting overview of the changing museum landscape in Europe. This year, this includes the [Nineties Berlin](#) attraction, [Museum of Ancient Corinth](#) in Greece, [14 Henrietta Street](#) in Dublin, tracking the venue’s history from Georgian townhouse to tenement and the [Museum of Secret Surveillance](#) in Tirana, Albania. There are around 60 entries in all. Meanwhile applications are open for the 2021 competition, with a €500 entry fee and a closing date of 27th March. [Museums Journal](#), [EMYA 2020](#), [EMYA 2021](#)

M + H Awards

The deadline for the M + H Awards is 31st January, with 13 categories for museums of all sizes – ranging from limited budget projects to those over £1m, marketing campaigns, touring exhibitions and shops. Chair of this year’s judging panel, Dr Matthew Tanner emphasises the morale and publicity benefits of taking part: “*the awards provide a great way to benchmark against your sector peers and to share your success with key stakeholders. Ultimately, there is nothing like having your hard work recognised and promoted on a global scale.*” [M + H](#)

International

Cultural bodies say that Iranian cultural heritage must not become a military target

V&A Director Tristram Hunt was among the cultural leaders responding to US President Donald Trump's statement that Iranian cultural sites could be a target if hostilities escalate between Iran and the US. Hunt tweeted that *"just as the bulldozing of Palmyra & significant heritage sites by ISIS was abhorrent, so US Gov threat to destroy important cultural sites in Iran must be condemned. This is a worrying step towards the normalisation of cultural destruction as a war aim"*. The Association of Art Museum Directors, representing 225 institutions in the Americas said that it *"deplores the tactic of targeting or demolishing cultural sites as part of any war or armed conflict. In this case, the region is home to unique and irreplaceable artefacts and archaeological sites, and AAMD strongly urges international engagement to protect and preserve our shared cultural heritage."* The World Monuments Fund has also issued a statement saying that any threat to cultural heritage sites is 'absolutely unacceptable'. A Downing Street spokesperson commented that *"international conventions are in place that prevent the destruction of cultural heritage"* and that the UK Government did not expect the threats to be carried out, a point also reiterated by Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab. Meanwhile, the Pentagon has said that cultural sites will not be targets: Defense Secretary Mark T Esper said *"we will follow all the laws of armed conflict"*. [Twitter](#), [Guardian](#), [Telegraph](#), [Guardian](#) (overview of Iranian cultural sites), [World Monuments Fund](#), [The Art Newspaper](#), [New York Times](#) (Pentagon statement) [United Nations](#)

Also: In a piece for *The Art Newspaper* on 8th January, V&A Director Tristram Hunt has also affirmed that the forthcoming exhibition 'Epic Iran' (21st October 2020 - 4th April 2021) will still go ahead. He writes: *"needless to say, some of the loans might now be less forthcoming and sponsorship more of a challenge. Yet to my mind, it is more important than ever that a museum like the V&A—whose collections, from the Ardabil Carpet to our Safavid ceramics, owe so much to Iranian and Persian culture—seeks to explore and explain this incredible 5,000 year history of art and design to a Western audience too often offered just one narrative."* He adds that while 'militants on both sides' seek polarisation *"what our museums tell is the complex, interwoven story of exchange and adaptation, over centuries, and across peoples."* [The Art Newspaper](#)

Washington's Newseum closes after 12 years

The Newseum opened in Washington in 2008, costing \$450m and including 15 galleries and 15 theatres over seven floors. Since then however, it has lost millions every year and closed at the end of 2019. Commentators point to a number of causes, from high entry prices, to nearby substantial competition from the Smithsonian, but its closure is also being seen as linked to the decline of traditional journalism over the same period, weakening the organisations which might have supported it. [Guardian](#), [Newseum](#), [Washington Post](#)

Cultural Protection Fund helps rebuild historic museum site in Yemen, despite continuing conflict

Although civil war and the world's worst humanitarian crisis continue in Yemen, a major museum is nevertheless on its way to restoration, with help from the British Council administered Cultural Protection Fund. In 2016, the National Museum in Taiz, based in a former Ottoman palace, was destroyed by Houthi rebels. Now £100k from the Cultural Protection Fund has restored the exterior and there are further plans to work on the interior, and recover a ruined palace next door, including museum objects buried beneath it. [The Art Newspaper](#), [British Council](#)

Rector says Notre Dame is 'not out of danger'

The rector of Notre Dame cathedral, Monsignor Patrick Chauvet says that the structure remains so fragile that there is still a '50% chance' that it may collapse. Scaffolding erected before the fire is now threatening the vaults, and it is only when these 50,000 tubes have been safely removed that the structure will be deemed stable. If this stage passes safely, the restoration of the cathedral is likely to begin in 2021. [AP](#), [Guardian](#)

Cultural saves, cultural gifts



'The Trumpeters' by Nainsukh of Guler, recently acquired by The British Museum following an export bar. c. the Trustees of The British Museum.

V&A launches Culture in Crisis database

V&A has launched a new Culture in Crisis portal, which it hopes will become the world's largest and most accessible database of cultural heritage preservation projects. Users can register to add their own preservation projects as well as search for existing work aimed at protecting culture at risk from conflict, criminal acts or natural disasters. Featured projects currently include youth-led work to preserve Lebanese cultural heritage and mapping Jewish heritage sites in Iraq and Syria. The portal is part of the wider work of V&A's Culture in Crisis programme, which launched in 2014 and has helped share knowledge across the world, as well as hosting conferences and summits. [Museums Journal](#), [Culture in Crisis](#), [V&A](#) (Culture in Crisis programme)

'The Trumpeters' by Nainsukh of Guler acquired by the British Museum

'The Trumpeters' by Nainsukh of Guler has been accessioned by The British Museum, following an export bar which allowed time to raise funds to buy the work. Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund all contributed to the £440k asking price. The painting, described as 'unparalleled in North Indian art' is thought to have been created between 1735-40 and depicts a traditional musical performance. It is now on display in the museum's China and South Asia gallery. [Guardian](#),

Hepworth Wakefield receives three modernist works under the Cultural Gifts Scheme

Three works by modernist artists have been acquired by the Hepworth Wakefield through the Cultural Gifts scheme, which allows donors to give important works of art in exchange for a tax deduction. The pieces include sculptures by Barbara Hepworth and Denis Mitchell and a painting 'Small Cornish Landscape' by William Scott, all once owned by Nancy Balfour, a former President of the Contemporary Art Society. Her niece, Kate Ashbrook, who donated the pieces said "*I am pleased that these striking and important works by British modernist artists have found a permanent home at The Hepworth Wakefield where they will complement the core collection. My aunt, Nancy Balfour - a commanding figure in the modern-art world - could have found no better place for them to live.*" [Gov.uk](#), [Guardian](#)

'Going to market, early morning' by Gainsborough receives export bar

Arts Minister Helen Whatley has placed an export bar on Gainsborough's 'Going to market, early morning', which was painted in 1773 and is regarded as among the artist's finest works. Showing a series of figures emerging from mist in a rural idyllic scene, it has previously been included in a number of major exhibitions. The asking price is £7.96m + VAT, but offers from public bodies at less than the recommended price may be considered. The bar runs to March 22nd, with a possible extension to September. [Gov.uk](#)

Also: A man has been charged with defacing Picasso's 'Bust of a Woman' (1944) as it hung in Tate Modern. He was 'swiftly apprehended' at the scene and the picture, which is from Tate's own collection, is now with the conservation team for assessment. [Art Newspaper](#), [BBC](#)

Jobs

A selection of jobs from across the NMDC membership this month:

- [Learning Producer, Schools and Young People - National Army Museum](#)
- [Curator, Community and Social Practice \(part time\) - Tate](#)
- [Wedding and Events Co-ordinator \(two posts\) - Kew Gardens](#)
- [Molecular Data Manager - Natural History Museum](#)
- [Head of Learning, Science and Industry Museum - Science Museum Group](#)
- [Assistant Curator of Archaeological Archives - York Museums Trust](#)

A complete list is available on our website [here](#).

Also: Arts Council England is seeking a [Director, Cultural Property and Investment](#).

This newsletter can also be read online at <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/news/newsletters/>