

Institution: University of Oxford		
Unit of Assessment: 29 Classics		
Title of case study: Exploring LGBTQ+ Histories Across World Cultures Through Museum Objects: changing museum practice and contributing to intersectional LGBTQ+ representation and culture		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Richard Parkinson R.R.R. Smith	Professor of Egyptology Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology	October 2013-present April 1995-present
Milena Melfi	Lecturer of Classical Archaeology	November 2004-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013-31 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p><i>Exploring LGBTQ+ Histories Across World Cultures Through Museum Objects</i> has generated long-term and permanent institutional change by reshaping museological and curatorial practices around LGBTQ+ objects. The project has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - influenced and inspired a change in attitude towards LGBTQ+ museology and archaeology - engaged audiences with issues of LGBTQ+ identity and rights, increasing awareness of a global perspective on LGBTQ+ objects and identities - increased the understanding, for visitors, of the role of museum artefacts in representing LGBTQ+ identities and histories by reshaping the landscape for LGBTQ+ representation within museums and heritage sites. 		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Parkinson, Melfi, and Smith's research investigates how museum objects communicate directly to audiences, and how a reframing or recontextualization of the museum object can draw attention to new cultural narratives or erasures. This is also resonant in the area of their research that relates to the use of non-original museum objects, such as casts, in combination with LGBTQ+ artefacts from around the world.</p> <p>Parkinson's research has focused on sexuality and identity in Ancient Egyptian poetry since the start of his career, and concerns the development of a 'queer material philology' for Middle Egyptian texts (monographs of 2009, 2012, ongoing). This developed into an interest in how the ancient Egyptian past was employed by LGBTQ+ authors such as Marguerite Yourcenar and E. M. Forster in order to present a 'queer' sense of historical identity [R3]. This ongoing research into the 'use of old objects' (Forster), often acquired in colonialist contexts, has fed into his museological work, in collaboration with former colleagues at the British Museum, to explore, develop and refine ways of showcasing the diversity of LGBTQ+ identity across world-cultures. This involves the use of artefacts to communicate more directly to audiences by escaping the constraints of culturally-bound terminology. Work on ancient Egyptian representations of desire has tried to mediate between fully contextualised specialist interpretations and LGBTQ+ community-led interpretation [R3]. Discussions with museum colleagues [R2,R3] have shaped the broadly assimilationist and collaborative approach adopted and advocated by the project, which aims at providing a sustainable long-term visibility and accessibility of LGBTQ+-focused research within the normative Oxford academic ethos.</p>		

Smith and Melfi's research on the LGBTQ+ historical figure Antinous is part of a wider project on the art and culture of the Greek East under the Roman Empire and has shaped the academic discourse around casts in museum contexts. The experience gained from the exhibition *Gods in Colour* (2015) underpinned the work on the Antinous exhibition, where casts were fashioned to convey a specific message and museum objects were juxtaposed with newly made casts [R5]. The repurposing of casts (by colouring or associating them in 'unconventional' ways) proved a highly effective model for transmitting cultural messages and presented a major challenge to Euro-centric narratives of art history. Casts were given their own life and identity beyond notions of authenticity. This was highly successful and thought-provoking in Oxford, so much so that chromatic questions are now at the forefront of the teaching of classical sculpture in Oxford. Long-term research in the field of Hadrianic culture and religion [R6] was applied to the case of Antinous. The exhibition's display of movable and adaptable casts that queered the Winckelmannesque ideal allowed the project to create a different narrative from that of recent exhibitions. The research on the cult of Antinous and its material correlates (busts, statues, coins, gems) was published in a book *Antinous: Boy Made God* [R5]. Work on the publication aided the selection of objects for the exhibition and took its precise form to serve the exhibition. This research interfaced with Parkinson's research directly when the exhibition was scheduled alongside the British Museum partnered *No Offence* exhibition at the Ashmolean (25/9/2018–24/2/2019).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** [Chapter, available on request] R. Parkinson (2016), 'A Little Gay History, from Ancient Egypt to the Modern Museum: A Personal View', in R. Knoop and L. van den Hoonaard (eds), *Queering the Collections*. Amsterdam, Reinwardt Academy; IHLIA, 21–46. ISBN: 9789071681264
- R2.** [Chapter, available on request] R. Parkinson (2019), "'The First Gay Kiss?': An Ancient Egyptian Monument' in C. Brickell and J. Collard (eds), *Queer Objects*, Otago, Manchester University Press, 22–7. ISBN: 9781526135766
- R3.** [Journal Article] R. Parkinson (2019), 'Imaginary Histories: Ancient Egypt in the Writings of Marguerite Yourcenar and Philippe Derchain', *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 48 (2019): 207–40. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:deac1d0c-ea1f-4363-a1b7-f46a6bf3ced7>
- R4.** [Authored Book, available on request] O. Bobou, M. Melfi, R.R.R. Smith (2015 eds), *Gods in Colour: a guide to the exhibition*, Oxford, Ashmolean.
- R5.** [Exhibition] R.R. Smith F. Gigante, J. Lenaghan, and M. Melfi (2018), *Antinous. Boy made god*, Oxford (Ashmolean). Exhibition details at <https://www.ashmolean.org/event/antinous-boy-made-god#/> and book (available on request) <https://shop.ashmolean.org/antinous---boy-made-god-ash-8765.html>
- R6.** [Article, available on request] R.R. Smith (2019), 'Antinous: a boy made god in the Roman Empire', *Omnibus* 78, 4-6.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The project has changed museological practice around LGBTQ+ identities and histories in parts of Europe

According to the Co-Director of the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, Parkinson's collaboration with the British Museum 'gave the museum the confidence to tackle this long overdue subject at a time when many cultural organisations were nervous about the topic' [E1.1]. The Museum's Head of Interpretations and Volunteers (HoIV) writes that Parkinson's research was the 'inspiration for an exhibition, *Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories* (11/5/2017 – 15/10/2017) and associated trail', [E9]. Parkinson's *A Little Gay History* [see R1, R2] gave the museum the tools to curate the exhibition, which featured many objects from the book. As external advisor for the exhibition, Parkinson shaped the labels, text, and information, all key for visitor engagement [E9]. A report, summarised in the HoIV's letter, tells us that 'visitor feedback and evaluation of the exhibition was extremely positive, as were comments made on social media, and it attracted over 160,000 visits during its run at Bloomsbury' [E9]. One visitor tweeted, 'First time EVER seeing an LGBTQ label in a museum! Wow @britishmuseum - thank

you!!', [E3.1]. This temporary exhibition shifted visitors' perspectives on the BM itself and its relationships to not only LGBTQ+ heritage but also colonialism. Another visitor noted: 'The British Museum is like...a bastion of colonialism. The fact that you've got this exhibition [...] shows that the Museum is willing to modernise. They're developing the way they look at the world...that made me see the Museum differently. I never expected to see that in the British Museum.' [E9]

The project inspired an attitude change around LGBTQ+ museology and archaeology in the UK and Germany.

The Project Manager for 'Queer Archaeology', a museum project at Hannover and Hildesheim, wrote that 'My own work as an art historian, curator and researcher is deeply influenced by [Parkinson's] approach' [E1.9]. The Collections & Conservation Officer at Bolton Museum writes: 'Richard's work has underpinned every LGBTQ+ history project I've worked on' [E1.7]. One audience member in a public lecture by Parkinson (2016) noted, 'It was a lightbulb moment for me in the audience...back then I was not an active LGBTQ+ ally but Richard's lecture changed that and led to a transformation in attitude among the University's museums' [E1.8]. In collaboration with Parkinson, the letter's author went on to launch a trail during LGBTQ+ history month in 2017 with five events held by the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) with 748 people in attendance [E1.8]. This work has led to the PRM being awarded GBP91,200 for a new project, with an emphasis on public engagement and knowledge exchange, called Beyond the Binary [E1.8].

The project's work on original and non-original museum objects engaged audiences with issues of LGBTQ+ identity and rights, amplifying a global perspective on LGBTQ+ objects and identities.

Following the temporary exhibition, a free British Museum Partnership exhibition toured the UK, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 [R1, R2, E8]. At the Ashmolean in 2018, Parkinson, Smith, and Melfi brought LGBTQ+ world histories into conversation with Greco-Roman history, with two co-situated exhibitions: a) The British Museum's associated exhibition *No Offence* (25/8/2018 – 2/12/2018) b) *Antinous: Boy Made God* (25/8/2018 – 24/2/2019) [in total: 29,186 visitors]. An exhibition report records how the connection between non-original museum objects, including casts, and global LGBTQ+ artefacts engaged visitors who 'appreciated the global perspective on LGBTQ [sic] history and the diversity of the artefacts presented' [E6, E8]. The same report notes that 'of 52 respondents, 100% rated the exhibition positively ('excellent', 'good', or 'fairly good'). 50% stated that it had changed their "perception, views or thinking about the themes presented"' [E6]. The social media statistics state there were 16,661 engagements with posts across Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook with 91,985 Impressions on Instagram and a reach of 116,760 across Instagram and Facebook combined [E3.2]. Interest in this collaboration was picked up in the press with 38 articles covering the exhibition and its associated permanent trail in national art journals and publications like *The London Review of Books*, in local newspapers, and personal blogs [E7]. The exhibitions interfaced with additional events, including a series of early career research-led talks [E4], an interview with film director James Ivory at the Oxford Curzon with a Q&A (6/11/2018; audience of c.100), and an 'In Conversation' at the Sheldonian with a Q&A (7/11/2019 audience of c.470; podcast) [E4].

The project has resulted in associated temporary and permanent LGBTQ+ objects and trails being curated on local, national and international scales.

In Oxford the press reported on the associated trail's amplification of uncovered LGBTQ+ sites and histories [E7.3]. In London a Collections & Conservation Officer reports that because of Parkinson's work at the BM, '[the] associated [online] trail is now a permanent feature and an audio trail was created to link 15 objects "from deep history to the present day"' [E9]. In a report on the BM's trail and tours: 'Reactions to the tours were 100% positive – with people wishing they were longer or that there were more objects' [E1.7, E8]. Some reactions were emotional with people talking about 'feeling seen in the Museum for the first time' [E1.7, E8]. This work raised awareness of LGBTQ+ histories for visitors, and increased the available information on/for LGBTQ+ people more broadly. A leaflet was developed from the tour and exhibition,

which features prominently during LGBTQ+ history month and London pride annually. An excess of 20,000 leaflets have been distributed since 2017 [E9].

The exhibition at the Ashmolean influenced further reconstructions of a newly discovered Antinous bust [R7]. In February 2019, at the closure of the exhibition, a team from the Art Institute of Chicago came to the Ashmolean to conduct a 3-D scan of the Melfi/Smith exhibition cast of the Antinous bust from Syria (CG H 109). The Collection Manager from Chicago writes that 'The [Oxford] exhibition certainly helped with the creation of a more accurate replica of the AIC and Altemps' Antinous fragment rejoined [*sic*] by bringing so many relevant pieces (especially the bust from Syria) together for me and our Italian colleagues to study and consider as we created a new replica' [E1.6]. The data acquired were used to create a new, more accurate, version of the Ludovisi-Chicago bust now on display in Chicago [E7.6].

The British Museum partnership tour brought LGBTQ+ world history to the heart of local communities beyond London and Oxford.

'[I]n total over 260,000 people visited the touring exhibition during its run at these five venues. This total visitor figure made it the most successful British Museum touring exhibition for the last six years' [E9]. The notable visitor statistics were from: National Justice Museum, Nottingham (14/12/2018 – 3/3/2019; 12,251 visitors); Bolton Museum (15/3/2018 – 26/5/2019; 23,273 visitors); Norwich & Norfolk Millennium Library (8/6 – 31/8/2019; 208,271 visitors); Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum, Dorchester (21/9 – 17/11.2019; 2,222 visitors) [E4, E8]. We know from visitor feedback data from Bolton that work on the exhibition changed local institutional practice and has led to over 300 LGBTQ+ related objects now listed in their database [E1.4, E5]. Their report on visitor engagement records that 'Local LGBT+ community groups actively engaged with the exhibition documenting their own stories, and attending the exhibition & events – this was the first time an LGBTQ+ exhibition had been held in Bolton and many of the visitors had never been into the museum before – the legacy of this is that many are now regular visitors and consider the museum a safe space' [E1.4]. The exhibition's draw in Bolton and its engagement with the public can be seen through comparison: for their LGBTQ+ exhibition they write: 'we had approx. 200 attendees, for the recent Periodic table exhibition opening night we had approx. 50 attendees', [E1.4].

The project makes a substantial contribution to intersectional LGBTQ+ representation and socially progressive culture internationally.

Across the exhibitions and associated events, the project has facilitated discussions of LGBTQ+ objects and histories with visitors. The Volunteer V&A Tour Coordinator writes that Parkinson's work and his consultation helped to 'bring in new audiences that previously would not have considered entering a museum for fear of not having specialised knowledge, or assuming they would not see themselves "reflected" in the collections" [E1.2].

The project has reinforced the existence of LGBTQ+ identities across place, time and culture and from the Volunteer V&A Coordinator's experience: 'The [...] subsequent *Love, Desire, Identity* exhibition and the Out in Oxford project emphasised the centering of the LGBTQ+ visitor and demonstrated how lived experience could be presented alongside curatorial expertise' [E1.2].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

E1. Collated Email Responses, January-July 2020

- 1.1 Co-Director, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries p.2
- 1.2 Volunteer V&A Tour Coordinator p.3
- 1.3 President, Oscar Wilde Tours p.4
- 1.4 Collections & Conservation Officer: Bolton Museum p.5
- 1.5 Graduate researcher at Oxford Brookes p.8
- 1.6 Collection Manager at The Art Institute of Chicago p.11
- 1.7 Freelance digital and heritage consultant p.12
- 1.8 Assistant Archaeologist West Berkshire p.14
- 1.9 Project Manager "Queer Archaeology" p.17

- 1.10 Cultural Heritage Research Group Reinwart Academy p.18
- E2.** Selected Social Media and Online presence
- 2.1 Blog Posts – British Museum
- 2.2 Videos – British Museum
- 2.3 Radio and Podcasts – British Museum and Ashmolean
- E3.** Collated Social Media and Statistics
- 3.1 Collated Twitter Posts – British Museum
- 3.2 Social Media Statistics and Supporting Evidence Across Twitter, Instagram, And Facebook - Ashmolean
- E4.** Events run in conjunction with, as result of, and using the research developed by the project, 2018-2020
- 4.1 Bolton events for LGBTQ+ history month
- 4.2 Related events in Oxford
- 4.3 Bolton Museum
- 4.4 Norwich & Norfolk Millennium Library
- 4.5 Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum, Dorchester
- 4.6 British Museum (2018) ‘School Session: Relationship and Sex Education’
- E5.** Bolton Museum Database (excerpted version of LGBTQ+ objects from around the world)
- E6.** Exhibition Evaluation Summary & Visitor Feedback Data for *Antinous* and *No Offence*
- E7.** Press for Exhibitions - *Antinous*, *No Offence*, *Out in Oxford*, and *Desire, love, identity*
- 7.1 Antinous Reviews
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| i <i>Apollo Magazine</i> , 18.01.19 | v <i>London Grip</i> 02.2019 |
| ii Following Hadrian 06.03.2019 | vi <i>Cherwell</i> (a) 25.09.2018 |
| iii <i>LRB</i> , Vol 41(3), 7 February 19 | vii Dr Benjamin Wild, blog 24.02.19 |
| iv <i>Minerva Magazine</i> 2018 | |
- 7.2 Collated Press for Antinous
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| i Following Hadrian (b). | xi Ox Magazine November 2018 |
| ii <i>Cherwell</i> (b). | xii <i>Museological Review</i> 2018 |
| iii Honor the Gods Blog | xiii <i>The Attic</i> , 28.01.2019 |
| iv <i>LRB</i> (b) | xiv <i>LRB</i> (c) |
| v Benjamin Wild (b) 24.02.2019 | xv <i>The Times</i> 29.12.2018 |
| vi <i>Oxfordshire</i> 01.11.2018 | xvi <i>The Cherwell</i> (c) |
| vii <i>Oxford Mail</i> 29.09.2018 | xvii <i>Art Daily</i> 2018 |
| viii <i>Oxford Times</i> , 27.09.2018 | xviii <i>Oxford Mail</i> 24.09.2018 |
| ix <i>Royal Academy</i> , 04.10.2018 | xix <i>The Times</i> 19.01.2019 |
| x <i>Ox Sylva</i> Nov – Jan 2018 | xx <i>Apollo Magazine</i> , 19.01.2019 |
| | xxi <i>The Times</i> 05.01.2019 |
- 7.3 *Oxford Times* – LGBTQ+ city trail, 15.11.2018
- 7.4 Politiken-Parkinson-Interview-12-March-2020
- 7.5 Politiken-Parkinson-Interview-12-March-2020
- 7.6 Antinous 20 The New Face of an Old Favourite, 03.08.2020
- E8.** Independent Impact evaluation of the ‘Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories’ exhibition by DC Research, commissioned by the BM – Nov 2020
- E9.** Letter from Head of Interpretations and Volunteers, BM, 21.01.2020.