

Appendix C – repatriation and restitution of objects and human remains.

Guidelines on the procedure for dealing with repatriation and restitution of objects and human remains from the collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM), Exeter, May 2020.

Background

This document should be read in conjunction with RAMM’s Collections Development Policy (2020-25), particularly section 15 ‘The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains’.

The museum’s governing body, ECC, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance.

RAMM is mindful of existing UK museum sector guidance on repatriation, namely:

▶ Museums Association Code of Ethics, Additional Guidance (2015):

Deal sensitively and promptly with requests for repatriation of items in the museum’s collection, both within the UK and from abroad. Take into account: the law; current thinking on the subject; the interests of actual and cultural descendants; the strength of claimants’ relationship to the items; their scientific, educational, cultural and historical importance; and the consequences of retention and repatriation for a range of stakeholders.

- ▶ Museum Accreditation Scheme Guidance issued by Arts Council England (ACE) in March 2019
- ▶ Collections Trust template and checklist for recording and researching restitution and repatriation claims (2015)
- ▶ ‘Restitution and Repatriation: Guidelines for Good Practice’ published by the Museums & Galleries Commission (2000).

Arts Council England (ACE) is due to produce further guidance on the topic of repatriation later this year (2020). RAMM reserves the right to update this document on the basis of changes to ACE guidance.

The process of dealing with repatriation requests at RAMM

1. Individuals, cultural groups, museums (or similar organisations) and government departments wishing to make a request for repatriation of artefacts or human remains from RAMM's collection should:

- ▶ make their request in writing to the Museum Manager
- ▶ clearly identify the artefacts they are requesting
- ▶ provide a background to their claim
- ▶ provide an assessment of the significance of the object/s to their community
- ▶ describe the proposed future use of artefacts

2. In dealing with repatriation and restitution claims, RAMM is committed to:

- ▶ act promptly
- ▶ treat requests with sensitivity and confidentiality
- ▶ record and document any claims
- ▶ investigate any potential competing claims for the same material
- ▶ form a recommendation by undertaking a multi-faceted review of factors, including, but not limited to, the scientific or cultural importance of the artefacts, the strength of claimants' relationship to items and the consequences of either retention or repatriation

3. RAMM is a service of Exeter City Council (the governing body) and all decisions on repatriation of artefacts and human remains rest with them. A full report on requests for repatriation will be presented with an officers' recommendation at a meeting of the Executive Committee of ECC where councillors will make a decision.

4. The process of evidence gathering and report writing can take several months before presentation at committee. Claimants should expect complex cases to take on average a year to process.

5. Claimants will be immediately notified of the outcome of the committee's decision. A positive outcome will require further discussions with relevant museum staff on the logistics of transferring ownership.

6. Formal requests for repatriation of artefacts and human remains from RAMM's collections should be sent to:

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