

rammm

Annual Review
2023 – 24



Councillor Bob Foale
Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture & Tourism
Exeter City Council

From illuminated manuscripts to subterranean spaces, last year RAMM brought inspiration and excitement to the people of Exeter. It is heartening to see how the Council's investment in the museum brings so much joy to visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

The *Gatekeepers to Heaven* exhibition saw six exquisite Anglo-Saxon manuscripts return to Exeter for the first time in over 400 years from the Bodleian Library in Oxford. It was a privilege to view them close-up. To complement the exhibition during the summer, the museum's garden was transformed into a medieval arena, with sword fighting, archery, falconry and craft activities.

Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary was an exhibition appealing to a different audience. It explored the concepts of thresholds, darkness and prehistory, featuring major works by the 18th-century artist Sir Joseph Wright of Derby, the famous Surrealist René Magritte and abstract artist Henry Moore, amongst others. It also provided a darkly inspiring theme for the events programme, including an underground Lates event and a Cave Critters party for youngsters.

The museum also embarked on an exciting and groundbreaking collaboration with the University of Exeter to provide open access to its collection of digital images. The GLAM-E Lab is spreading awareness of the museum's art works and ensuring the museum's collections are available for use by everyone for free.

RAMM supports Exeter City Council's wellbeing agenda, this year partnering with Wellbeing Exeter and Age UK Exeter. RAMM's two community connectors linked older people to cultural experiences; I was particularly moved to

hear about one man who was inspired to leave his house for the first time in three years to come to the museum.

At the other end of the age spectrum, we started work on the Dartmoor Frame of Mind photography project which has been empowering young people experiencing mental health challenges to improve their wellbeing through photography.

Much of this work took place while the museum was undergoing a major building project to replace its ageing Victorian roof. Thanks to the Museums Estate and Development Fund (MEND), administered by Arts Council England, this work will ensure that the museum will be watertight and well-insulated for years to come. Inevitably, this has had an impact on events and venue hire offerings as space has been limited, and a couple of the galleries have been out of use for a few months. I would like to thank RAMM's visitors for bearing with us throughout this work.

This annual review shines a light on much of the visible work of the museum, but I wanted to mention the behind the scenes work which often goes unnoticed. I have been particularly impressed by the amount of effort that goes into making the museum environmentally sustainable.

This review shows the important role RAMM plays in the cultural life of the city. As Exeter City Council's flagship cultural service, it is a vibrant public space that promotes a sense of pride and joy in our local population. It attracts people and businesses to our city. It gives young people the chance to be inspired and uplifted and all of us a sense of connection with each other and the world around us.





Sublime Symmetry: the mathematics behind De Morgan's ceramic designs

Sublime Symmetry investigated the use of mathematical principles in De Morgan's beautiful ceramic designs.

William De Morgan (1839 – 1917) was one of the most intriguing and inventive ceramic designers of the late Victorian period. His conjuring of fantastical beasts and manipulation of meandering flora and fauna fascinated his contemporaries and still captivates today. During his career, William De Morgan revolutionised the field of ceramic design with his reinvention of lustreware, dedication to exploring Middle Eastern designs, invention and use of his own kilns, and his wonderful patterns.

Through examination of the mathematical devices used in his designs, *Sublime Symmetry* presented De Morgan as a natural mathematician and talented draughtsman.

Exhibitions



Fish Punch Bowl by William De Morgan © Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation

This exhibition was curated for RAMM by Sarah Hardy, Director of the De Morgan Museum, and featured objects not exhibited as part of the previous tour. Objects were generously loaned by the Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation.

Gatekeepers to Heaven: religion, knowledge and power in medieval Exeter

The ancient city of Exeter had one of the most impressive cathedrals in medieval England. Its bishops were at the heart of the religious, cultural and political life of the city and country. For most ordinary people, the guardians of the church and its sacred texts were truly the gatekeepers to heaven. Among Exeter's most powerful bishops were Leofric (1050 – 1072) and John Grandisson (1327 – 1369). Both amassed magnificent collections of manuscripts, making the cathedral library a renowned centre of European learning.

This landmark exhibition brought back six exceptional medieval manuscripts to Exeter for the first time in over 400 years. The manuscripts were loaned by the world-famous Bodleian Library in Oxford where they form part of the founding collection of 1602. Originally, the manuscripts were part of Exeter cathedral's impressive medieval library. Each one shed light on the medieval world and Exeter's place in it. They showed the power of words, pictures and books, and how the concerns of the Middle Ages reflect those of our own times.

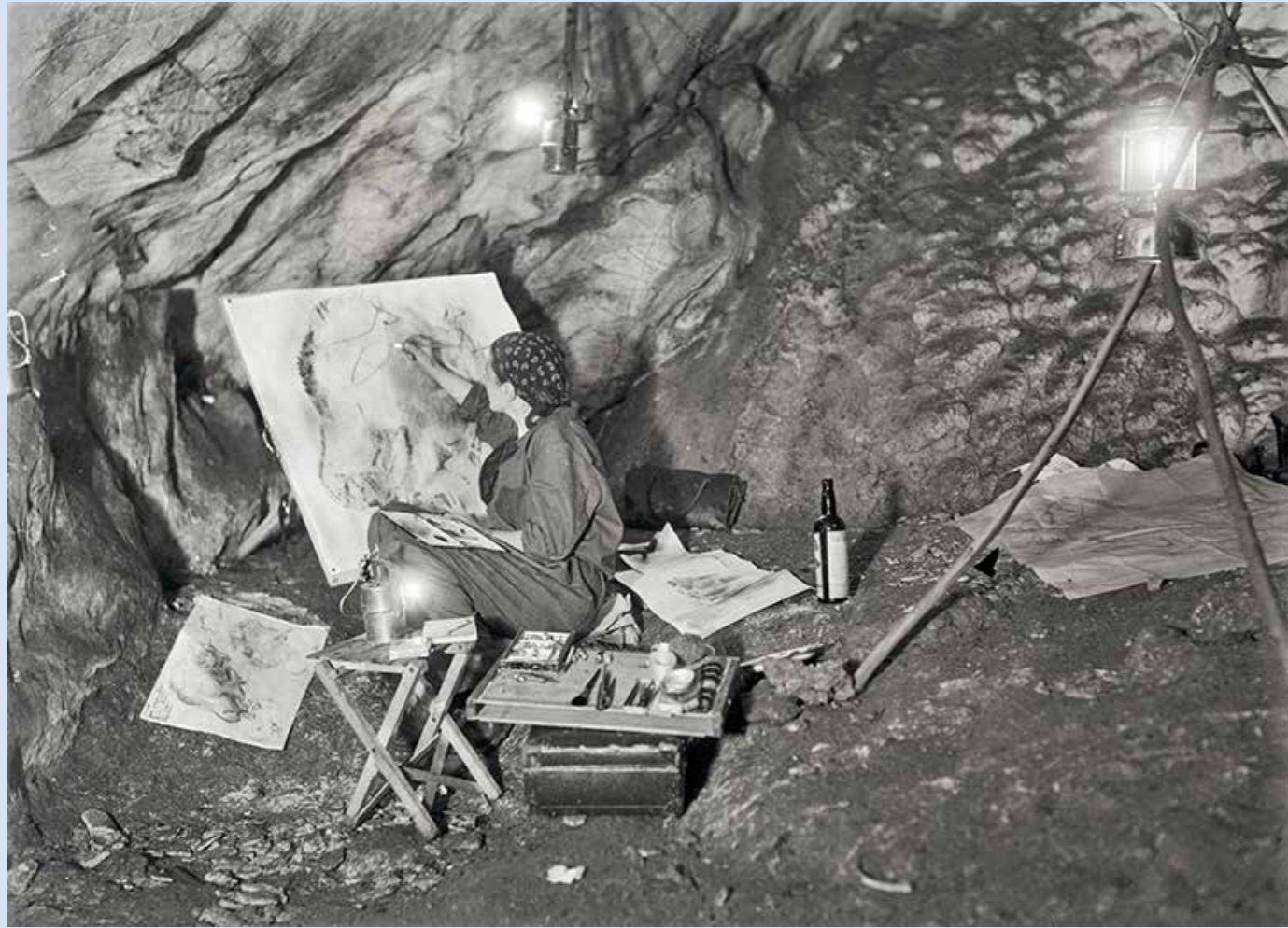
This exhibition was made possible with generous loans from The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, grants from the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund, RAMM Development Trust, Friends of RAMM and support from donor Maddy Jevon, RAMM Patron, and as a result of the Government Indemnity Scheme.

RAMM would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity for Gatekeepers to Heaven and Hollow Earth, and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.



MS Bodl 717 fol vi verso © The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford





Unknown photographer, Elisabeth Pauli at work in Northern Spain, 1936 © Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt am Main

Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary

Hollow Earth was a major thematic art exhibition bringing together a wide range of responses to the image and idea of the cave.

Spanning works by more than 30 artists, it included painting, photography, sculpture, and video, with objects from ancient history through to modern and contemporary art on display.

Items from RAMM's collection were also exhibited, including a selection of extinct animal bones and antiquities found in caves from around the world. Devon holds a unique place in history as the birthplace of cave-hunting, declared William Pengelly, the Victorian pioneer of systemic cave research in England. The county contains some of the UK's most important prehistoric cave deposits.

The exhibition descended into the depths to consider questions of thresholds, darkness and

prehistory and featured major works by the Victorian painter Sir Joseph Wright of Derby, famous Surrealist René Magritte, Abstract artist Henry Moore, Contemporary filmmaker Michael Ho, and Guyanese Expressionist painter Aubrey Williams, as well as new commissions including large-scale watercolour paintings from Chioma Ebinama and a film installation by Lydia Ourahmane.

Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary was a Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition, developed in partnership with Nottingham Contemporary and in collaboration with Glucksman, Cork and RAMM, and was made possible as a result of the Government Indemnity Scheme.

**HAYWARD
GALLERY**
TOURING



Pressing Images: prints from Exeter's fine art collection

Pressing Images: prints from Exeter's fine art collection uncovered the roots of printmaking in early modern Europe. The exhibition illustrated to visitors the results of the revolution brought about by the introduction of the printing press, which democratised art by making images accessible and affordable for the first time. This ground-breaking invention paved the way for mass-produced images, transforming art from an exclusive luxury into a shared cultural experience.

A multifaceted selection of 45 works on paper and print plates, woodblocks and other printing tools led audiences on a captivating journey through time, from 16th-century woodcuts to the cutting-edge creations of the 21st century.

Highlights included Adam and Eve after the German master Albrecht Dürer (1504), one of the earliest surviving woodblocks by Jost Amman (1539–1591), William Hogarth's 18th-century satirical engravings, 19th-century Japanese prints, works by Devon-born trailblazer Dorothea Wight (1944–2013), and much more.



ARTIST ROOMS: Bill Viola

American artist Bill Viola (born 1951) is recognised internationally as a pioneer of video art. His work explores universal human experiences – birth, death and the unfolding of consciousness – and is shown in museums and galleries worldwide.

This exhibition presented three intimate and moving works from his well-known series *The Passions*.

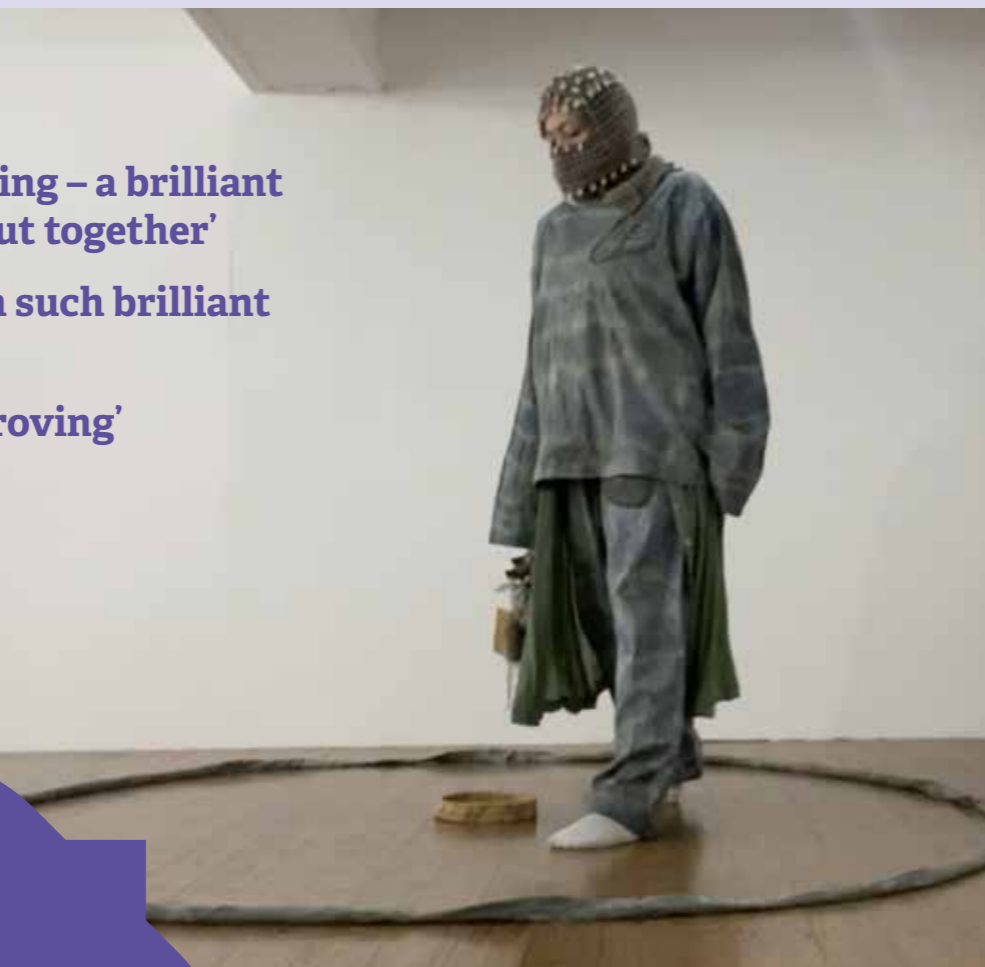
Image above:
Bill Viola *Catherine's Room* (detail) 2001
ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland
© Bill Viola Studio. Photo: Kira Perov

ARTIST ROOMS is a national programme and collection managed by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland with the support of Art Fund, Henry Moore Foundation and using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Creative Scotland.



'Best thing ever'
 'Every one was banging – a brilliant programme well put together'
 'You're working with such brilliant artists here'
 'Exeter is really improving'

Feedback from visitors



Contemporary Art

The museum's internationally significant collections provide inspiration for professional artists to create new work in a variety of media. This year RAMM commissioned locally based artists Ashanti Hare (Plymouth) and Janet Sainsbury (Exeter) to create new work inspired by very different objects.

Ashanti Hare created a performance inspired by *minkisi* or 'power bundles' from the Congo in RAMM's World Cultures collection. Working with RAMM's Curator of Ethnography, Hare researched the African origins of Vodou and Vodon practices as well as water gods in a range of African and Norse mythologies finding that water was a metaphorical bridge between worlds.

Explaining their approach to creating the performance Hare said:

'I have been exploring the idea of a sentient River Exe which reveals itself as the watcher connecting physical and documented histories of Exeter with the wider South West through the oral histories of global majority people and wildlife that travel to it.'

The handmade objects used by Ashanti Hare in their performance were subsequently displayed in the courtyard core wall alongside a *nkisi* from the museum's collection together with a documentary film of the performance. The commission also formed an evening of innovative contemporary performance art and dance. Devon-based artists and dancers Richard Chappell Dance and NooN shared their experimental performance in response to human connections and the ecological emergency.



Janet Sainsbury is well known for her contemporary approach to portraiture. For her commission she chose to study four women artists whose work is in RAMM's art collection: two Exeter-based contemporary artists, Michelle Sank and Amy Shelton, and two artists with links to the south west, Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) and Gillian Ayres (1930–2018).

Sainsbury engaged directly with the work of all four artists, visiting RAMM's offsite stores to see paintings by Ayres and Hepworth and studying Sank's and Shelton's work in recent exhibitions at RAMM. Selected sketches and finished paintings were displayed in RAMM's courtyard core wall.

A short video filmed at the artist's studio nearby and in the museum provided RAMM visitors and online community with an insight into the making of the work for RAMM. An 'in conversation' with RAMM's Contemporary Art Curator & Programmer and Janet Sainsbury also took place alongside an additional, temporary display of extra artwork.



Janet Sainsbury
 Barbara Hepworth 2023
 © Janet Sainsbury

'Having my work on display at RAMM has been an amazing opportunity. The six months has gone by quickly and I've enjoyed every aspect! Thank you so much for the commission, the studio visits, the interview & conversation, it has all been a wonderful experience.'

Janet Sainsbury

Collections



One of RAMM's best known paintings, *Portrait of a Man in a Red Suit*, has featured prominently in two landmark exhibitions this year: *Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* and *Entangled Pasts, 1768–now. Art, Colonialism and Change at the Royal Academy, London*. Both exhibitions investigated the long relationship between Britain and its colonies and their impact on British culture.

As an 18th-century painting of a Black Briton, although tantalisingly still unidentified, RAMM's portrait is incredibly pertinent to contemporary debates on the nature of British identity.

RAMM also lent five objects to the British Museum's *China's Hidden Century* exhibition including a pair of Mandarin boots and a beautifully decorated floral scroll.



New additions to the collection have come from as close to home as RAMM's roof – two sheets of lead signed by tradespeople over the decades – and as far away as a monkey skin cape from Kenya.

Most numerous are the additions to the Natural Sciences collection. By far the largest collection came from Toddy Cooper, a local naturalist. He donated his extensive collection of over 1500 specimens of spiders, fleas and lice, as well as his nature and weather diaries from 1961–2021. Barbara Benfield continued to add to the collection of lichens she has deposited at the museum and more Devon plant specimens arrived as a transfer from Manx National Heritage as part of their collections review.

Finding an Anglo Saxon ring is rare in Britain. Ornatly decorated gold rings, such as the one found in Wembworthy near Chulmleigh, are even rarer. Around the ring are cat-like heads with large, almost bat-shaped ears. Between each pair of masks there are two intertwined beasts. RAMM purchased this ring through the Treasure Act with support from grants and donors.

NEW ACQUISITIONS **51**
INCOMING OBJECT LOANS **160**
OUTGOING OBJECT LOANS **31**



Another piece of treasure is a tiny medieval silver gilt pilgrim badge of St Barbara. She was associated with towers and lightning and was the patron saint of miners and military engineers (people associated with explosives).

Collecting both old and new, RAMM also added contemporary artworks to the collection. A fundraising campaign allowed RAMM to acquire a major work by Dartmoor-based photographer Garry Fabian Miller. *The Darkroom's Fading Presence* is a luminogram created by shining light through layers of cut paper and glass onto photosensitive paper, making the photograph without a camera. A partnership with the National Gallery helped RAMM acquire two new works by Céline Condorelli. *Bulk: Everlasting Colour* and *Pentimenti (0751)* address the boundaries between public and private, art and function, work and leisure, to reimagine what culture and society can be as well as the role of artists within them. All three works will be on display at RAMM later this year.

A generous donation allowed RAMM to add ten contemporary, enamel portrait miniatures by Gillie Hoyte Byrom to the collection. They are inspired by historic portraits.



Thank you to our funders
Anglo Saxon ring: Purchased with support from Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Headley Trust, Friends of RAMM, C James Cadbury Charity, private donations from RAMM Patron, Julian Steer-Fowler, Erin Cox Jewellery and a private donor.

St Barbara pilgrim badge: Purchased with support from the C James Cadbury Charity

Garry Fabian Miller work: Purchased with support from Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, Art Fund, Friends of RAMM, RAMM Development Trust and donations.

Celine Condorelli works: Presented by the Contemporary Art Society through a partnership with the 2023 National Gallery Artist in Residence programme, with the support of Anna Yang and Joseph Schull, 2023/24

Open Access



An elegantly dressed Indian lady by an unknown Indian artist. Watercolour on paper, about 1780.

After a year of research, review and preparation, in January 2024 RAMM revealed its bold new Open Access Strategy to the public.

It is the result of a collaboration between RAMM and the GLAM-E Lab – a partnership of law schools at the University of Exeter and the New York University consisting of legal academics and specialists working together to develop open access policies for galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

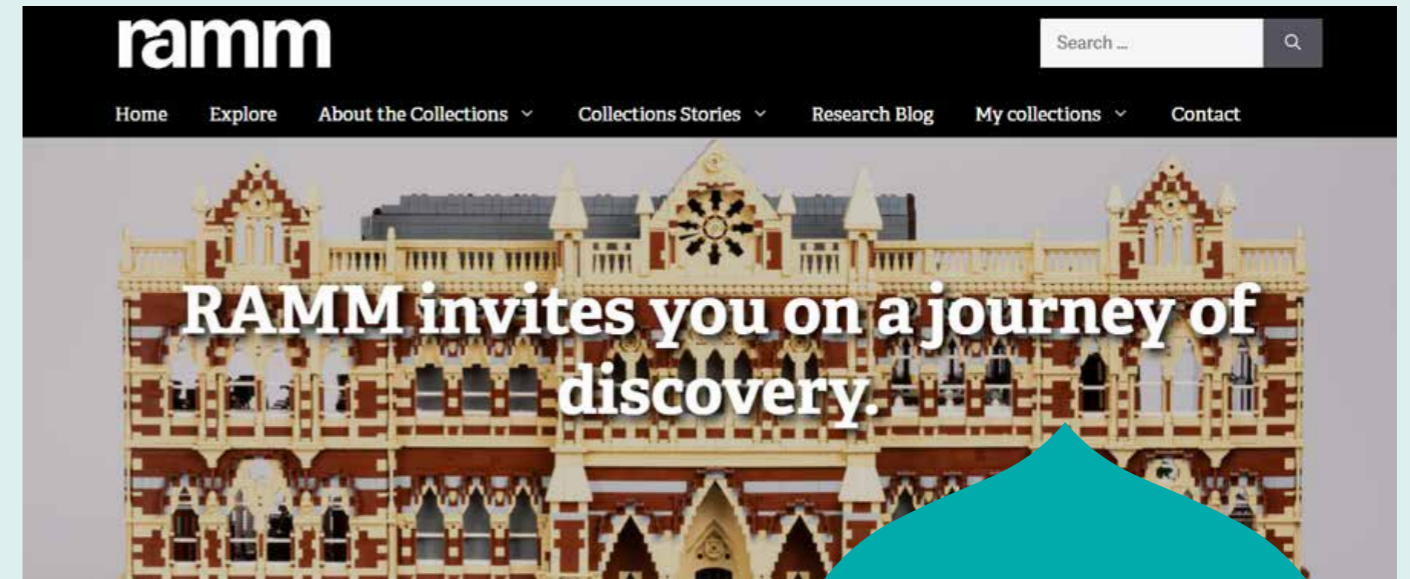
Recognising recent shifts in copyright legislation, RAMM has now released hundreds of its collection images which are in the public domain free to use for the public. This followed a trial in 2023 where 63 images, mostly depictions of Devon and Exeter, were added to Wikimedia Commons, resulting in an astonishing 6.16 million views. Over the course of 2023, at least 41 had been added to 65 Wikipedia articles in seven languages, ranging

from Richard III to the English Civil War and the Baedeker Blitz. Images will be released in batches over the coming twelve months.

The project is funded by the UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Exeter's AHRC Impact Accelerator Account.



Deceiver mushroom (*Laccaria laccata*). Hand-coloured magic lantern slide by Theodore Green, 1933.



A digital asset management system (DAMS) will integrate with the museum's collections database, enabling staff to quickly generate new and topical content.

In May 2023 RAMM secured £247,708 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for an innovative project – 'Changing Stories: Connecting and collecting with Exeter's communities' – which will embed lasting change in the way local people are consulted, and their voices recorded, catalogued and shared by RAMM through new web content and gallery interpretation.

At the heart of 'Changing Stories' is building a digital asset management system (DAMS) which will integrate with the museum's collections database, enabling staff to quickly generate new and topical content. This is particularly needed for RAMM's engagement work with local community groups that generates new stories and ideas about the museum's local collections, but which currently has no permanent home. This means people accessing the online catalogue are missing out on valuable local knowledge and insight. The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Dynamic Collections campaign was set up to help with just such a problem. It supports collecting organisations across the UK to become more resilient and open up their collections.

Dynamic Collections: Changing Stories at RAMM

Behind the scenes work has begun on creating the new digital infrastructure and prototyping digital object labels for the *Making History* gallery at RAMM. Also, the museum has begun work with local group *Hikmat* on the first of two community projects related to the project.

New communities have been engaged in a series of 'Getting to Know You' events held at the museum, drawing family groups from a wide variety of backgrounds: Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Palestine and Somalia. Sessions were themed around food and included looking at and discussing food-related objects from RAMM's *Making History* gallery.

Changing Stories will run until January 2026. The museum extends its thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, RAMM Development Trust and the Friends of RAMM for their support.





Conservation

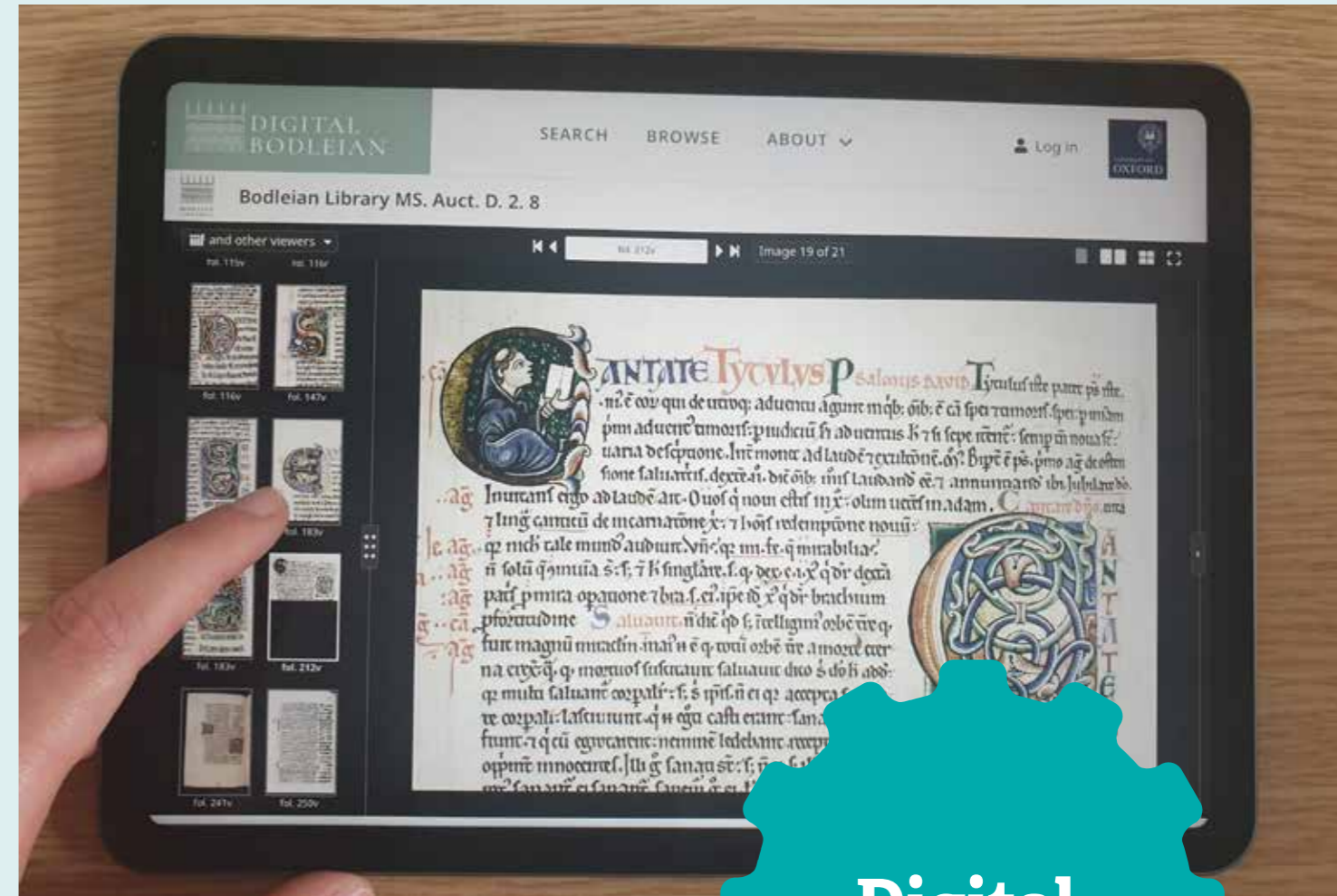
RAMM's exhibition schedule kept the conservation team busy condition checking, conserving and installing objects for five temporary exhibitions, one small Viewpoint Display and three contemporary art installations. From small owl taxidermy to silver rings and from lantern slides to gilded frames, the objects the conservation team worked on covered the full breadth of RAMM's collection.

The preparations for RAMM's summer exhibition for 2024 saw bicycles, ice skates and a 19th-century perambulator being treated in the conservation laboratories. Many of these items have not been on display before.

A highlight for RAMM's Senior Conservator was a visit to the Conservation Department of the Courtauld Institute to have a closer look at RAMM's Portrait of a Man in a Red Suit together with their conservation specialists. The painting was examined with infrared and ultraviolet light and the pigments analysed via x-ray fluorescence. It was hoped that the results of this examination would give clues as to who might have painted this charismatic portrait, but sadly our man in a red suit kept his secrets.

We also continued our outreach work, spreading the word about museum conservation by taking part in the #AskAConservator campaign on X and talking all things conservation on local radio station Phonic FM as part of International Women's Day. We helped train the next generation by hosting two student placements over the last year and taking part in an event organised by the Institute of Conservation's Emerging Conservators Network.

Last, but not least, we also worked towards making our conservation laboratory greener by introducing a recycling scheme for our disposable gloves, probably the largest part of our conservation waste.



Digital

During 2023-24 RAMM built on the successful launches of the new main and collections websites. The museum also launched its new Open Access policy and partnership and continued its transition to Microsoft 365.

rammuseum.org.uk

2023-24 was the second year for RAMM's redesigned website. Since launching the site, average engagement rate has increased steadily from 59.39% in Q1 to 64.07% in Q4. RAMM reaffirmed its commitment to accessible digital content by commissioning a new British Sign Language 'welcome to RAMM' video. This BSL and captioned film features on the home page.

rammcollections.org.uk

RAMM launched *Collections Explorer*, its revamped online collections website, in May following development the previous year. Collections Explorer features over 18,000 fully searchable object records, with users able to search via topics or project tags. Since launch, traffic has increased tenfold with the average engagement rate in Q4 exceeding Q1 by 9.31% (average engagement rate 38.39%)

[Social media](#)

Across RAMM's main three social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X) the museum had over 30,000 followers at the end of March 2024. RAMM's accounts reached over 100,000 people across Instagram and Facebook (data is no longer provided for Twitter/X), and over 50,000 on YouTube.

RAMM achieved 124,000 video views across the different channels in the period. Eighty-six percent of audiences spend a quarter or more of their time on social media watching videos, making video a vital tool for reaching audiences.

The Exeter City Council and Visit Exeter social media accounts helped amplify the museum's messages and reach more people: @ExeterCouncil and @VisitExeter.

Events

'We love these events...
Lovely atmosphere and mix
of people.'

Lates attendee

PLEASE BE
GENTLE
WITH US!
WE'RE
ENDANGERED



We began the year welcoming families to take part in a wide variety of creative workshops inspired by RAMM's collections – from making an Ancient Egyptian amulet to ornamental birds; designing Indonesian shadow puppets to creating miniature Roman soldiers.

Throughout the summer we offered a medley of medieval-themed events inspired by the *Gatekeepers to Heaven* exhibition. Children took part in sword fighting battles, tested their aim shooting arrows, watched in awe as birds swooped above their heads in our falconry shows in the garden, and created traditional baskets and swords from willow. We ran creative sessions making illuminated bookmarks, medieval coin pouches, shields and trebuchets.

Things headed underground in the autumn with a creepy cave critters party, where we switched the lights off and encouraged visitors to discover cave dwelling demons and delights. We welcomed an armadillo and other underground dwelling beasts during half term; with mythical monster tales and cave artwork also making an appearance.



Knitting, crocheting, mending and sewing, all inspired by our collections, were on offer for our adult audience this year in intimate craft workshops. Our short courses continued with sessions on printmaking and Regency dress.

Our successful, sell-out, adults-only RAMM Lates continued with a focus on the *Earthspells* and *Hollow Earth* exhibitions. Visitors enjoyed poetry, dance, music, craft, talks, workshops, a silent disco and much more. Strange goings-on and cryptic clues formed part of our murder mystery evening featuring a Dartmoor-themed adventure. We were delighted to welcome classical music back to RAMM with *Winter's Edge*, a festive musical extravaganza event in December. This was a wonderful evening featuring vocal and musical performances inspired by the season.

Engagement



The engagement team's work this year has used creativity to boost wellbeing, provide joy and create a sense of belonging for all ages.

Exeter City Council's investment in the museum enabled RAMM to take its dementia-friendly multisensory sessions to care homes, clubs and hospitals. The museum joined local social prescribing networks to host two Wellbeing Exeter community connectors helping over-50s through culture. An Exeter City Football Club group – where some members hide loneliness behind banter and hot chocolate – chatted about paintings, nesting birds and local history. Monthly Friendly Fridays, which combined tours, objects, craft activities and a cream tea, succeeded in inspiring people to leave the house – one person for the first time in three years.

We worked with colleagues in Exeter City Council to promote the museum as a warm space for Exeter citizens in need; take objects to social housing community rooms for older residents; and provide café vouchers for mental

health support organisations. In addition, the RAMM café hosted Knitstop, a low-cost initiative of Wool on the Exe to teach knitting in accessible locations.

The museum used the calm galleries and handling collections to connect and meditate with artefacts, in a mindfulness course run in partnership with Devon Recovery Learning Community.

Project Buzz, a lively exhibition of insect swarms created by 12 local community groups of children and young people aged 4 to 18, took over the RAMM café between June and February. Their artwork brought RAMM's insect collections to life with a conservation message for future generations, and offered young participants a chance to meet and learn from local artists.



Project Buzz: a creative arts project involving children and young people.

Exeter College UAL diploma Dance students performed in response to artist Bill Viola, wearing skirts created by A-level textiles students. ▶

The team's remit to spread creativity among children also included history-themed activities at social housing community days and summer holiday free lunches, coach visits for rural families on low incomes, and welcoming the Balloons charity for bereaved families.

RAMM, University of Exeter Computer Sciences Department and Exeter Science Centre worked with local neighbourhood and community groups to co-produce content for RAMM's Transport exhibition. Through a series of workshops, the groups explored transport-related issues faced by local residents, including pollution, congestion, public transport, and inequalities of transport.



Skills development



RAMM's skills development programme continues to provide opportunities for people to gain new skills and experience and grow in confidence.

Youth Panel

RAMM recruited 15 young people with a passion for museums to take part in our Youth Panel this year. They successfully curated a café exhibition called *Data-day life* which explored how data from our daily life can be creatively expressed in engaging and innovative ways. The panel worked alongside artist Molly Rooke to create their banners to celebrate the uniqueness of daily life, inspired by the exhibition Artist Rooms: Bill Viola. Another highlight was the Youth Panel's sold-out event, *Seize the Clay* where they collaborated with *Something Lovely Pottery* to encourage participants to create designs inspired by the William De Morgan exhibition, *Sublime Symmetry*.

Future Skills

19 participants enrolled on RAMM's Future Skills programme which encourages individuals of any age to explore various roles within the museum sector, including collections research, exhibitions, marketing and events. This year, Future Skills participants helped produce a viewpoint exhibition on portrait photography.

Supported Placements

RAMM has continued to offer supported placements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to allow them the opportunity to explore meaningful work experience in the cultural sector. This year, RAMM has worked with 5 students from Exeter College, Ellen Tinkham College and Adamson Employment support (in connection with the job centre).

Skills Development

Student Placements

RAMM has hosted 19 student placements this year from students from Exeter College, University of Exeter, University of Plymouth and University of Derby. These students have helped throughout the museum, including Collections, Audience Development, Visitor Services and the Development Team.

In addition to student placements, we have also participated in a number of schemes hosted by the University of Exeter. For instance we have hosted three students to complete an Access to internship which is a paid opportunity offered to students who meet Widening Participation criteria, one student completed a paid Student Business Placement in Marketing, one student completed a Pathway to Arts, Culture and Heritage placement helping update the shop's website and 21 Liberal Arts students participated in a ThinkTank challenge which asked them to research and present new ideas on how we encourage people to make their first visit to the museum. ▶





Last year, RAMM's 287 volunteers contributed over 14,200 hours' work to the museum. This represents a 33% increase on the number of hours given last year.

2023-24 saw our museum-wide volunteer programme bounce back to 96% of pre-Covid numbers. This recovery was exceptional and was achieved a year before we had anticipated.

Ensuring that our volunteer workforce is representative of our local population is a key objective for the museum. It is important to us that everyone who works at the museum feels welcome and part of the team. Equality, diversity and inclusivity are key priorities for the volunteering programme. This year 50% of our volunteers were 25 years of age or under, 20% of the team declared a disability and 26% identified as LGBTQ+.

As well as visitor and tour guides, the volunteers have supported and enabled many services and projects, including the continued reintroduction of our in-gallery object handling, our schools programme, family learning, exhibitions, and permanent collections. It is equally important that we collect and act on feedback from our visitors with the help of our volunteer visitor survey team.

Visitor facing roles are only one aspect of volunteering, with more going on behind the scenes in collections research, conservation, and marketing.

RAMM's volunteer engagement lead also contributed to the Exeter Heritage Partnership (EHP) volunteering programme to build a more resilient multi-venue volunteering infrastructure for greater Exeter.

2023-24 saw our museum-wide volunteer programme bounce back to 96% of pre-Covid numbers.



13,805 students across all age ranges have independently visited the museum

RAMM's schools programme has experienced a strong year delivering face-to-face learning to 2,448 Key Stage 2 pupils on subjects such as Roman Devon, Exeter and the Blitz during the Second World War and Ancient Egypt.

In addition, 13,805 students across all age ranges have independently visited the museum, interacting with our exhibitions, permanent displays, and in-gallery object handling.

The museum launched its first regular dedicated home education offer. Families were invited to visit the museum to learn about the Romans in Devon, Second World War, and Ancient Egypt, plus one-off craft workshops inspired by World Cultures.



RAMM worked with local artist Molly Saunders and Exeter College students to co-produce See Things Differently activity game cards, with the aim of engaging younger audiences with contemporary art.

The team also launched online teaching resources, a legacy from the groundbreaking 2022 exhibition *In Plain Sight* about Devon's links with the transatlantic slave trade.

RAMM strives to be a welcoming place for everyone, whatever their background, and the Visitor Services team continues to exemplify the excellent quality of visitor engagement that RAMM has long been recognised for.

Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme (VAQAS) assessed the museum in June 2023 and we were thrilled to achieve a score of 86%, an improvement on our previous score. The report highlighted the strength of the visitor service:

'It was particularly noticeable how friendly and welcoming everyone was...all staff continue to offer a very good level of service.'

Feedback from visitors has also been excellent. One visitor wrote to us in July saying:

'The friendliness of the staff that left the deepest impression. Three different staff members approached me to offer advice/information. I don't remember ever having experienced that at a museum before...'

Accessibility

RAMM is recognised locally and nationally for being an accessible museum and this year saw more museums and heritage organisations contacting RAMM for advice on how to make their venues more accessible for everyone. This year, we created several new resources. In partnership with Living Options Devon and Exeter Studio Sound Gallery, we created a new audio guide designed specifically for people with visual impairments which explores 16 iconic museum objects. We also created a new BSL video for our website which offers a warm welcome and useful information for visitors who use BSL. We now create visual stories and offer relaxed sessions for all our exhibitions.

Colleagues have received training from internal and external organisations to ensure they have the right skills and knowledge. This year saw the team undertake deaf awareness and Start to Sign training from the RNID as well as well as Mental Health Awareness training. RAMM's own Accessibility Champions continue to deliver Disability and Deaf awareness training to new staff and volunteers. We have also worked with the Bristol Museums Trust and Julian House to further explore person-centred, positive communication.

We work with Visit Exeter to showcase the museum to both local visitors and tourists. This includes featured blog posts on the Visit Exeter website, What's On event listings, and social media takeovers of the Visit Exeter Instagram account.



This year saw the launch of the RAMM Souvenir Guide. With input from across the RAMM team, the new-style guide provides visitors with information and inspiration both during and after their visit to RAMM. The guide has been well received and has entered our book best sellers list, which was headed by the *Sublime Symmetry* catalogue. Our new ticketing system enabled us to offer visitors the popular option of a discounted catalogue with their exhibition tickets. The other three books on our hit list all had a local focus, including RAMM's own *Alfie's Night Out* which was re-launched with a new choice of Victoria Byron illustration for the cover, this time featuring Gerald the Giraffe.

2023-24 was the best retail year for the Shop at RAMM since its opening in late 2016. Christmas sales are always good for the shop as local residents and visitors discover something different to give as gifts across all age and price ranges. This summer however was also particularly successful with its focus on medieval manuscripts: our sales ranged from books about going to church in medieval

England to knight's swords and quill pens. These were accompanied by beautiful William De Morgan-inspired jewellery and homewares for *Sublime Symmetry*. Later in the year we moved to cave-themed gifts to reflect the *Hollow Earth* exhibition: adults were intrigued by the books *Underland and Underworlds*, while children were fascinated by *The Street Beneath my Feet* and soft-toy bats.

The shop displays artist-maker craft, prints and artworks by local artists and those from further afield. This year we welcomed new work from artist-makers including Ann Bruford, Sarah Hemmings-Vourda, Bronwyn Williams-Ellis and Stories in Silver jeweller Steph Tooley. We also featured a wide collection of prints by artists from Exeter's Double Elephant print workshop to accompany the *Pressing Images* exhibition.

How will you Support RAMM today?

ramm.uk/Support



Join the mailing list

ramm.uk/Connect

Keep in touch by signing up to Connect online. It's free and only takes a couple of minutes. Hear about the things you love and never miss out.

Volunteer

ramm.uk/Volunteer

RAMM depends on a family of dedicated volunteers. We'd love to welcome you to the team.

Play the Exeter Community Lottery

ramm.uk/ExeterLottery

Choose the RAMM Development Trust as your local good cause. Do good whilst being in the running to win big. Good luck!

Make a donation today

ramm.uk/Donate

Online you can make a one-off donation or set up a regular monthly or annual gift. At the museum you can use our cash or contactless donation boxes. If you can, do remember to Gift Aid your donation and increase its value by 25% at no extra cost to you.

There are so many ways to get involved with RAMM. From you as an individual deciding to join the mailing list, to big organisations sponsoring the next inspiring exhibition.

If you are not yet supporting RAMM, please do consider one of the following options.

Become a Patron

ramm.uk/Patron

Get closer to RAMM life through the Patron scheme.

Sponsorship

ramm.uk/Sponsorship

Do you own or work for an organisation who likes to support the community through sponsorship?

Do get in touch. Your support helps to keep Exeter's heritage and history alive.

If you are already supporting RAMM, thank you! Perhaps there is another option that would interest you? For example, if you currently make the odd donation, would you consider setting up a regular gift or joining the Friends of RAMM?

Whatever you choose to do, it will go a long way in supporting the museum's work, whether that is caring for a single object, or curating an inspirational programme of activity for us all to enjoy – every act of support matters.

Join the Friends of RAMM

ramm.uk/Friends

Meet like-minded people with a passion for heritage and culture and enjoy a programme of special events and benefits. You can buy a Friends membership as a gift for a loved one.

Gifts in wills

ramm.uk/GiftsInWills

Make history with your gift to the future. Request a free RAMM gifts in wills pack using the link which includes a useful Q&A section.

Thank you for your incredible contribution

RAMM is an Exeter City Council Service and is grateful for the investment the residents of Exeter make in the museum.

DONORS

Thank you to everyone who gave a gift to support RAMM's work this year. From £1 to £1,000, every donation was put to hard work and this Annual Review is testament to what you made happen.

GIFTS IN WILLS

Thank you to those who remembered RAMM with a gift in their will. Thank you also to those who have pledged a gift in their will for when the time comes. The team is always so touched when supporters remember RAMM in this very personal way.

GRANT GIVERS

Art Fund
Arts and Humanities Research Council
Arts Council England
Arts Council England/DCMS MEND
Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund
C James Cadbury Charity
Contemporary Art Society
The Costume Society (Elizabeth Hammond Grant)
Elmgrant Trust
Exeter & District Classical Music Trust
Exeter Chiefs Foundation
Exeter City Council
Exeter Literary Society
Friends of RAMM
Garfield Weston Foundation with Art Fund
Headley Trust
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Norman Family Charitable Trust
RAMM Development Trust

PATRONS

Adrian Sassoon
Andrew Gould
Chris & Jenny Rolfe
David Fursdon HM's Lord Lieutenant of Devon (Hon.)
Edmund Burke

General Sir John Waters GCB CBE (Hon.)
Heleen Lindsay-Fynn DL (Hon.)
John Lloyd Maunder DL (Hon.)
Julia Tremlett DL (Hon.)
Julian Steer-Fowler
Lord Devon Charles Courtenay (Hon.)
Maddy Jevon
Nick Baker (Hon.)
Steve Knightley (Hon.)

Thank you to all our Patrons who wish to remain anonymous.

SPONSORS

Bonhams
Drive Creative Studio
Great Western Railway
Stagecoach

Special Thanks

We would also like to give special thanks to all of our loyal Friends of RAMM members, the dedicated team of volunteers who help RAMM to do so much more than would otherwise be possible, and the passionate Trustees running RAMM's independent supporting charities – thank you.

PARTNERS

RAMM and its parent body, Exeter City Council, would like to thank all the museum's partners. They enable the public collection of over one million objects, to be used in innovative and creative ways with the communities we serve. RAMM would like to give special thanks to the University of Exeter and Arts Council England, for the ongoing supportive partnerships we hold with them.

Adamson Employment Support
Age UK Exeter
ARTIST ROOMS
Arts University Plymouth
Avocet Wealth Partnership Ltd
Balloons
Bath Spa University
Beacon Centre
BeBuckfastleigh
The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford
Bookbag bookshop, Exeter
Bristol Museums

The British Museum
Canada Council of the Arts
CEDA
Centre for Creative Industries, Exeter College
Chiara Betti, Freelance Curator
Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA)
The Dales
Dartmoor Preservation Association
The Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
The Devon and Exeter Institution
Devon Carers
Devon Development Education
Devon Diversity Consultants
Devon Recovery Learning Community
Devon Wildlife Trust
Diversity Trust
Double Elephant Print Workshop
ECFC Sporting Memories Group
Ellen Tinkham College
Exeter City Council older persons housing
Exeter City of Literature
Exeter College
Exeter Community Trust
Exeter Culture
Exeter Live Better
Exeter Living
Exeter Phoenix
Exeter Pride
Exeter Respect
Exeter Science Centre
Franklyn NHS Hospital
Girlguiding (Brownies)
Green Tree Court
Hayward Gallery Touring
Hikmat Devon
HM Government
Intercom Trust
Joe Blatherwick Photography
Jurassic Coast Trust
Learn to Live: 19-25
Libraries Unlimited
Living Options Devon
Literature Works
Magic Carpet
Mary Schwarz
Meridian Raw
The Museum Platform
National Galleries Scotland
Northcott Theatre
Nottingham Museums
Participate Arts
Pelican Project

Pete's Dragons
Quay Words
Quirk Theatre
Radical Ecology
Refugee Support Devon
Richard Chapelle Dance
Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia
Sound Gallery Exeter
Somin Somatic
Surface Impression
Tanglewood Creations
Tate
University of Derby
University of Exeter
University of Plymouth
Watermeadow Court
WayMakers
Wellbeing Exeter
Westcountry Schools Trust
Windrush Group
Wool on the Exe
The Westcountry Study Centre
X-Plore Youth
YAY! Cornwall
YMCA
Youth Arts & Health Trust

ARTISTS

Alistair Lambert
Amanda McCormack
Ashanti Hare
Bill Viola studio
Céline Condorelli
Clare Parker
Edgardo Ayala
Emma Welton
Felicity Shillingford
Garry Fabian Miller
Gemma Nash
Janet Sainsbury
Kay Walsh
Lucy Stein
Michelle Williams Gamaker
Molly Saunders
Naomi Vincent
Rosie Stiling
Ruth Bell
Sarah Gillespie
South West Dance Hub Company
Steve Claydon



Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery
Queen Street, Exeter EX4 3RX

Open Tues 10.30am to 5pm
Wed to Sun 10am to 5pm
Closed Mon and most bank holidays

ramm@exeter.gov.uk
rammuseum.org.uk

Flowers in a Vase Tile Panel by William De Morgan
(c.1890) © Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**