A series of exhibitions, events and digital encounters in 2017 presented by the University of Cambridge Museums
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Over 2017 the University of Cambridge Museums and Botanic Garden (UCM) marked the British Council’s UK-India Year of Culture with a shared season on the theme of India – a programme of exhibitions, events, digital encounters, discussions, installations and more within the city of Cambridge.

Called India Unboxed, the programme was rooted in our collections and explored themes of identity and connectivity for audiences in both the UK and India, with support from Arts Council England Change Makers funding – the only Museum recipient of the funding – and in partnership with the University of Cambridge.

India Unboxed welcomed children, young people and adults from across the city and beyond to explore Cambridge’s ties with India, and widened knowledge of our truly expansive South Asian collections.

Crucially, the programme enabled us to drive a conversation about representation and diversity within the UCM and for our audiences. Using the partnerships made and experiences gained through India Unboxed, we will continue to strengthen our commitment to making our collections as accessible as possible. We will consider issues of diversity and representation in all areas of our work, including our collections, programming, research, interpretation, audience engagement and workforce. This activity will be championed by the newly formed Change Makers Action Group – an important legacy of the project as a whole and our Arts Council England funding.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make India Unboxed such a success.

Jo McPhee
Head of University of Cambridge Museums Programmes
India Unboxed aimed to
– Articulate and explore Cambridge’s relationship with India and South Asia
– Create a diverse constituency of people with South Asian ties around our collections and museums
– Create a richer understanding of the UCM’s South Asia collections
– Promote UCM and University collections from South Asia and place them at the forefront of the University’s engagement with the subcontinent

Presented by the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM), India Unboxed took place in 2017 with a programme of exhibitions, events, digital encounters, discussions, installations and more.

Supported by Arts Council England’s (ACE) Change Makers Initiative, Malavika Anderson was the University of Cambridge Museums’ Change Maker, spearheading the India Unboxed programme as well as founding the Change Makers Action Group (CMAG).

With India Unboxed as its centrepiece, the University of Cambridge launched a year-long celebration of its ties with India with a visit to India by Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

‘I am extremely proud of Cambridge’s long-standing and deep-rooted relationship with India’
— Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

The Change Makers Action Group is a lasting legacy from the India Unboxed project. It is an open, democratic group of colleagues from across the UCM whose aim is to start a conversation about diversity and representation within the organisation and our audiences.
India Unboxed facilitated the development of new and existing partnerships, including with diverse-led organisations and those that enable us to engage more effectively with diverse audiences. Partnerships included those between our eight museums and Botanic Garden, as well as city and countrywide partnerships with community groups, cultural organisations, University departments and many talented artists, designers and facilitators. These partners are listed on pages 12–13 later in the report. Working in partnership with the University of Cambridge meant that India featured heavily as a theme during Cambridge Festival of Ideas and Open Cambridge.

The India Unboxed exhibition *The People of India: Anthropology and Visual Culture, 1800–1947* in partnership with the University Library, resulted in a student applying to do a PhD in the subject, a surprising and encouraging legacy for the programme.

‘India Unboxed was a very positive enriching experience.’
— Partner, India Unboxed

‘We were able to work with a new artist from an Indian background, and helped to diversify the pool of artists we work with.’
— Partner, India Unboxed
Rooted in our collections, the programme used innovative platforms and formats to explore themes of identity and connectivity for diverse audiences in the UK and India. Stepping beyond the boundaries of stereotypical perceptions, India Unboxed enabled contemporary and critical engagements, celebrating the diversity and plurality of the subcontinent and its unique relationship with the UK through 83 events, displays and exhibitions.

Due to the diverse nature of the UCM collections, it was more challenging for some museums to engage with the India Unboxed themes than others. The Museum of Classical Archaeology, which holds no objects from South Asia, curated *Imagining India: Greeks, Romans and the End of the Earth* in summer 2017. This exhibition explored the surprising connections between the Greco-Roman world and the Indian subcontinent, showcasing how Greek and Roman ideas about India continued to shape Western ideas about South Asia for centuries after antiquity. This was a fantastic example of the resourcefulness and commitment put towards India Unboxed and reveals how collections can respond in unlikely ways to challenging themes.

Another programming challenge for India Unboxed was to confront controversial topics head on. The Whipple Museum of the History of Science opened a discussion around Empire in the exhibition *Astronomy and Empire*. It explored the tangled history of science and the British Empire through the instruments, tools, and practices of those sent around the globe to observe, survey, navigate, and chart on behalf of Imperial interests.

‘Anecdotally, we noticed that during the period of our exhibition over the summer we had visitors from more diverse ethnic backgrounds, including people with South Asian heritage.’
— Partner, India Unboxed

‘New stories, outreach and risk taking commissioning.’
— Partner, India Unboxed
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

India Unboxed offered the UCM and its partners a new way of welcoming audiences to the collections and the venues that house them. Online articles, films, Facebook Live and social media channels helped introduce international audiences, particularly those in South Asia, to the stories India Unboxed unearthed, while more traditional forms of marketing (exhibitions leaflet, posters and targeted invitations) helped to attract and welcome both core and new audiences.

Media highlights included extensive coverage from Indian publications (Hindustan times, Indian Express, India Today), as well as in the UK (The Times, Metro, Cambridge News). The Festival of Light at the Botanic Garden enticed the BBC Breakfast Weather team to spend the morning reporting the national weather from the Garden, with Carol Kirkwood introducing the UK to Studio Carrom’s light installation, as well as the wider India Unboxed programme.

LEARNING PROGRAMME

The learning strand of India Unboxed aimed to engage children, young people and their families with the UCM’s South Asian collections. Schools and Widening Participation sessions were delivered based on the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology’s Another India exhibition and explored the themes of empire and identity. Activities were developed and delivered at community festivals and events, including the Arbury Carnival, the Big Weekend, the Cherry Hinton Festival, as well as at Cambridge City Council’s Children and Young People’s Participation Service (ChYpPs) summer events.

‘The exhibition, but even more so the events run during it have certainly reached new audiences both within the University and within Cambridge resident community, both old and young.’
— Partner, India Unboxed

The season ‘Highlight[ed] parts of our collection that were regularly not noticed. [We saw] an influx of more diverse families.’
— Partner, India Unboxed
Over 55,000 people visited the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology’s *Another India*, a unique exhibition exploring the heritage of India’s minority Adivasi or Indigenous communities.

These stories were told through two hundred artefacts and photographs from the Museum’s historic collections, and 23 newly commissioned artworks by indigenous artists from across India, acquired by its curator Mark Elliott, using a New Collecting Award from the Art Fund.
Now on display in the Museum’s Maudsley Gallery, this is one example of how India Unboxed strengthened the UCM’s relationship with local cultural organisations. It is vital that as museums, our collections represent the communities we serve.

During India Unboxed the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology received a generous donation of a Durga idol from the Indian Cultural Society, Cambridge.

During a residency at Wysing Arts Centre, artist Pallavi Paul visited and accessed archival material from the Bletchley Park collection for Terra Firma, a co-commission from the UCM and Wysing Arts Centre. The piece was installed as a ‘carpet’ in Gallery 8 of the Fitzwilliam Museum between October 2017 and February 2018 in response to the Museum’s Codebreakers and Groundbreakers exhibition. We were particularly excited to showcase this new artwork by a contemporary Indian artist, with support from Diversity Art Forum and the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation.
Installed at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, *take-hold* was a new kind of audio guide that helped visitors to navigate the Museum and its objects in a totally different way. Inspired by the *Another India* exhibition, it was created by interactive artists group non zero one with independent artist Sheila Ghelani, and with research and input by graduate researchers Danika Parikh, Akshyeta Suryanarayan and Ananya Mishra.

‘Made me think about the objects in the museum in a different way, a cool way to experience a museum.’
— Participant, *take-hold*

THOUGHT FACTORY AND STUDIO CARROM
India Unboxed Designers

Throughout the programme we worked with talented designers based in India to ensure the visual identity for the project was in line with contemporary Indian design, and to develop further connections between Cambridge and India. Thought Factory, based in Girinagar, Kerala, created the India Unboxed logo and visual identity.

Studio Carrom are a British-Indian design duo based in London and Bangalore, who worked with us to design a family trail, a spectacular light installation for the *Festival of Light*, and this evaluation report.
At St John’s College Old Divinity School, this photography exhibition explored the changing landscape and escalating water crisis of the Indian Himalayas. The installation combined academic research in geography and conservation with contemporary work by photojournalist Toby Smith and curated archival images from the collections of the University Library and Centre for South Asian Studies. It was supported by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Fund, ESPA – Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation, Department of Geography, Centre of South Asian Studies and Cambridge University Library.

The stories behind some of the UCM’s South Asian objects were told in a series of eight short films in collaboration with the University of Cambridge Office of External Affairs and Communications. These films digitally showcase connections between India and Cambridge by exploring a head-hunter’s trophy, a tin of tea, an exotic orchid, a fish-eating crocodile and other intriguing objects. The series gained 70,986 views with the second largest audience base being India, at 20.4% views; this very closely follows the UK at 22.6% views.
Alongside the eight University of Cambridge Museums and Botanic Garden, India Unboxed was developed in partnership with the University of Cambridge, cultural partners and community organisations. The programme was delivered with the assistance of a team of brilliant volunteers, many of whom continue to support the University of Cambridge Museums in various roles.
MALAVIKA ANDERSON

Cultural Programmer and Change Maker
‘To coincide with the 70th anniversary year of Indian independence, the India Unboxed programme celebrates the wonderful South Asian collections of the University of Cambridge Museums and Botanic Garden. A range of events [that] explored themes of identity and connectivity, telling fascinating stories of the relationship between two countries rooted in our unique collections.’
— Malavika Anderson, India Unboxed, Programmer

India Unboxed was supported by Arts Council England’s (ACE) Change Makers Initiative, which aimed to kick start change in ACE-funded organisations through a leadership placement for BAME and Disabled candidates. Malavika Anderson came to the UCM as a highly skilled, experienced and confident BAME cultural producer to take on the curation of India Unboxed.

Malavika strengthened her skills as a cultural leader by taking part in the Oxford Cultural Leaders Programme, the Arts Marketing Association’s Future Proof Museums programme, and attending relevant sector conferences. She influenced city wide change as a member of the Cambridge Arts and Cultural Leaders group, and organisational change as a member of the Cambridge Museums Steering Group, contributing to the strategic direction of the UCM. Malavika has become a role model and diversity champion for those coming into the sector, and the UCM is confident she will continue to inspire people and drive change in her new role as Head of Live Programming at the Wellcome Collection.

‘This has been an extraordinary programme and it’s increasingly evident that the Wellcome Collection is getting a very talented Head of Live Programming.’
— Kathy Fawcett, Relationship Manager for Museums, Arts Council England
The UCM recognises and values the role that volunteers play in diversifying its audience base, as well as supporting the work of the museums. India Unboxed has enabled the UCM to further reach out to communities who do not currently engage with the museums and to provide individuals with meaningful and beneficial volunteering roles within them. Over twenty new volunteers were recruited for India Unboxed and anecdotally UCM noticed that the programme attracted a diverse pool of volunteers, including many directly from various Cambridge South Asian cultural societies, including the Indian Cultural Society and the Cambridge Community Ethnic Forum.

Aarthi Arun was one such volunteer recruited through India Unboxed. Aarthi has subsequently been nominated
for the Outstanding Young Volunteer Award at the Share Museums East Volunteer Awards. First volunteering at the India Unboxed Family Festival, Aarthi was positive, friendly, and enthusiastic, and has continued to volunteer at UCM events following the completion of India Unboxed.

‘I really enjoyed helping families with the workshop activities at the India Unboxed event and felt they were very engaging, especially the Snakes and ladders activity led by artist David Allsop. It was such a pleasant surprise to be nominated for the award – I really didn’t expect it!’

— Aarthi Arun, India Unboxed Volunteer

Previous to Aarthi, the lower age limit for UCM volunteers was 18 years old. As the first 16 year old volunteer, Aarthi’s friendly demeanour, patient “can do” attitude and flexibility encouraged other members of UCM staff to take on younger volunteers for new projects and existing roles. She is a trailblazer for a new wave of inclusivity among the UCM; and since Aarthi, the museums and Botanic Garden have recruited many younger volunteers.
Throughout the summer, families and young people were invited to explore the India Unboxed exhibitions across the UCM with a number of events, activities and projects. The UCM supported a total of 145 young people to complete an Arts Award at either Discover, Explore or Bronze level over five different projects. The Arts Award is a range of unique qualifications at five different levels that support anyone aged up to 25 to grow as artists and arts leaders, inspiring them to connect with and take part in the wider arts world.

Discover India Arts Award Transition Project: In July 2017, 72 students due to start at North Cambridge Academy visited the Fitzwilliam Museum, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the Botanic Garden to complete their Discover Arts Award.

Discover Arts Award across Cambridge City: Over the summer months nine participants gained

‘I really enjoyed looking around the museum to find the objects for the Arts Award and patterns for my drawings and ideas. Thank you!’
—Participant, Summer at the Museums
Award in a day activity as part of the UCM's Summer at the Museums programme; 43 children and young people aged between 3 and 13 completed their Discover Arts Award in a day.

Bronze Arts Award in a Week: In August 15 young people, age 11–14, took part in a four-day course to achieve their Bronze Arts Award, inspired by exhibitions at the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Explore Arts Award with Young Carers: Over the summer six young people explored the India Unboxed exhibitions across five University of Cambridge Museums, working in partnership with local youth charity Centre 33 and poet, Hannah Jane Walker. The young carers engaged with the Museum of Classical Archaeology, the Botanic Garden, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the Museum of Zoology and the Fitzwilliam Museum over the 3-day project.

My favourite session was painting the elephant because it was therapeutic and I had lots of inspiration for [my] design’
— Participant, Arts Award in a Week
25% of visitors surveyed identified as Asian or Asian British.

The India Unboxed Family Festival was a one day event based on the exhibition *Another India* and a rare 19th-century Indian Snakes and Ladders board. Free family activities took place inside and outside of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology as part of the UCM Summer at the Museums programme.

The event included object handling and craft activities, theatre workshops, henna tattoos and a visit from a number of snakes and their handlers. The event was a great success, engaging families with the theme of the Museum’s collections and programme, whilst providing a fun-packed day supported by
India Unboxed volunteers. Lots of visitors stayed for a number of hours participating in all of the different activities. Flyers and posters designed by British Indian design company Studio Carrom were very successful in advertising the day to visitors.

576 people in total visited the Museum (398 adults, 178 children), plus more uncounted in the outside activities.

‘We really enjoyed it especially the snakes and making things’
— Participant, Family Festival

100% of visitors surveyed, said they were inspired to visit other museums and heritage organisations in the future.

This project aimed:
- To engage families with the South Asian objects in the Museum’s collection and beyond.
- To attract more first time visitors to the Museum, and to spread awareness of the Summer at the Museums programme.
The Festival of Light was an evening event which showcased spectacular light installations by Studio Carrom, Indian electronic beats by Talvin Singh, interactive art by Emergency Exit Arts, and family activities run by the University of Cambridge Museums. The Festival of Light began with a stakeholder event, which provided the perfect opportunity for the UCM to showcase the India Unboxed exhibitions and events to all our stakeholders, from community partners to representatives from funding bodies.

44 volunteers gave up their time to help deliver the event, support the stakeholder event and Museum activities for the public.

1,100 free tickets booked in advance.

200 of these tickets were reserved specifically for community contacts and participants of India Unboxed.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

25 October 2017
6.30–9pm
Cambridge University Botanic Garden
The project aimed:
- To celebrate Diwali, the festival of light observed across South Asia.
- To provide a celebratory event as part of the India Unboxed programme.

‘I learnt] that a lot of those really ancient fossils at the Sedgwick Museum came from India’
— Participant, Festival of Light

‘I just wanted to offer you my congratulations on last night’s stunning ‘India Unboxed: Festival of Light’ event – beautifully curated and choreographed, massively popular and totally unique!’
— Kathy Fawcett, Relationship Manager for Museums, Arts Council England

53 people from across the UCM, University, local partners and funders attended the stakeholder event.
Mill Road Celebrates India was a one day community event organised by the Mill Road History Society and took place at the Cambridgeshire Deaf Association, which welcomed approximately 400 visitors. It was a day of activities inspired by India, including talks, dance, poetry, music and more. Participants were invited to bring an object from the subcontinent, tell a story or ask a question. The event was part of Open Cambridge 2017.

‘A lively happy day, both entertaining and instructive, that was enjoyed by everyone who came.’
— Mill Road History Society
The UCM supported the Mill Road History Society through funding and staff resources to assist with the development and promotion of a successful large scale programme. The event allowed the Mill Road History Society to strengthen its links with local cultural groups and form new partnerships.

“We consolidated our relationship with the Cambridge Community Ethnic Forum and made good friendships with local traders and individuals.”
— Mill Road History Society
A significant legacy for India Unboxed is undoubtedly the Change Makers Action Group (CMAG). Founded by Malavika Anderson during her placement, CMAG is an open, democratic group of colleagues from across the UCM, whose aim is to drive a conversation about diversity and representation within the organisation and our audiences.

This is responding directly to the UCM’s high-level commitment to increase diversity in the areas of audiences; programmes; collections; research and interpretation; and workforce.

CMAG has developed its manifesto and is developing exciting projects for the future. UCM is committed to supporting members of CMAG in influencing organisational change, by providing them with training and skills sharing opportunities.

We hope that CMAG has begun to spread a greater

‘We believe that diversity – of nationality, of background, and of opinion is one of Cambridge’s greatest strengths.’

‘We are a University that is open to the world and must remain so.’

— Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

‘The significance and influence of CMAG is in the cross-section of museums and society that it represents: we can encourage and create better understanding and representation at every level of our organisations and ultimately make the museums and garden more relevant spaces for all people.’

— Co-chairs, Change Makers Action Group
awareness of the key role that the UCM can play in promoting, developing and discussing diversity, as well as instigating substantial cultural change in terms of awareness and understanding of diversity issues amongst existing staff within the UCM.
India Unboxed was a challenging but hugely rewarding project, which enabled the UCM to develop exciting new partnerships with community groups, cultural organisations, University departments and various talented artists, designers and facilitators.

The programme gave us the opportunity to look critically at the ways in which we talk about challenging themes and allowed us to respond to these challenges with the formation of the Change Makers Action Group. The UCM has become energised in its commitment to new ways of programming and working with partners across Cambridge and beyond.

‘It is worthwhile challenging ourselves and responding to challenging topics; [...] sometimes we will have difficult encounters, but we will learn from them; and it is better to try than do nothing at all.’
— Partner, India Unboxed
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