

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:49:11

Dr Rebecca (Becky) Martin

Hello and welcome to the Pitt River's Museum.

00:00:49:13 - 00:01:12:11

Dr Rebecca (Becky) Martin

In this first episode of Making the Pitt River's Museum, there's a lot to be excited about. Hearing from the musician. And look at it from the conductor and roll. Hip of the multimedia artist based right here in Oxford. About their work as first creative fellows on the Making Museum project. They've been working with a collection of sound recordings, as well as responding to objects on display in the galleries and even the museum space itself.

00:01:12:13 - 00:01:26:16

Unknown

Do we have visitors before? Well, that's quite the experience to stand in a space like the people of this museum. You'll hear some of the poetry of music that they produced during their time in the. Throughout the episode. You've been listening to me for quite a while now, so who am I and what am I doing in your ears?

00:01:26:18 - 00:01:46:11

Unknown

Well, I'm Becky Martin, and I work on a research project called Making the Museum here at the pyramid. I work alongside our project lead, Chris Morton, and I project research about it by the team. You'll hear from today. As we all know today, some of our most pressing questions about the work with Soundclips and research team also include my time slot in Critical Step, and I'm sure you'll hear from in future episodes. But today you'll mostly be hearing from X and Rawz.

00:01:46:13 - 00:02:19:19

Rawz

I'm Rawz, I'm an artist from Oxford. My practice is based around words and music, but also through other forms of creative expression as well; drawing, collage, painting, all sorts of things. So, yeah, just a creative basically.

00:02:19:19 - 00:03:17:17

X

My name is Xolile Madinda, most people call me X because my name starts with an X. I used to rap a lot when I was younger, and then I stopped because I decided that whatever I could be rapping about, I could be doing something about. So hence, in 2014 I started the Black Power Station, so we find a space. So basically, I'm an artist, but I can say I'm an art activist, using art as a way to stimulate people's mind to build a better society, because we inherited a broken society after 1994 in South Africa. I believe that art is the only tool for us to build a future better society through the arts.

00:04:03:13 - 00:04:35:18

Rawz

So, the first thing that I touched on in the archives, the first thing I worked with creatively was this 30-minute forest recording. Hopefully it's something I'll remember for a long time to come, the experience of sitting with my headphones on in my workshop and just being in that forest, or that forest being in me, or both of those things at the same time. You know that moment that was captured, that 30 minutes that was captured in 1980-something, in a place that I've never been, in an environment I've never seen or smelled or touched, but a part of it could be with me, and I could be with it. So yeah, that that was a really special moment to kind of start the creative process. And actually, the first sound that I'm going to play on Saturday at the event is part of that recording. So, yeah, it's been a journey. It's been a really special journey and meeting people that I can't see and hearing things that I've never touched. You know, it's magic.

00:06:25:00 - 00:09:38:17

X

I guess for me, it's the same feeling. I love sound. I'm obsessed with things that make sound, even the sounds we don't hear. So I always choose the weird ones, because I want to give attention [to them]. So the one I'll be experimenting with first is the so-called bad recorded version of a record cylinder. And I love it, because it has that feeling that even someone who's a sampler, or someone who's into hip hop would gravitate towards to kind of create a feeling of the big vinyl \*scratch noise\*, like, you know, it is one of the coolest things, but imagine taking a recording that you don't really know what is being played is not clear to your ears. So for me, that's what I'm enjoying with this recording, is the atmosphere not the actual... the recordings, yes, but also the atmosphere they're recorded in because I'm interested about the environment that they were created in. And part of me, I can say, interacting with the recordings, there's many levels of me how and why am I interacting with them.

One is musically; I would want to get the genius and the greatness of talent of these people. I know they never went to a class to read. This might have been an instrument extended to the father, the father's father. So it might be in a community. I'm interested in what channelling of energy they were trying to give. So I'm obsessed with many levels. So with the music, I'm trying to interact the music, and the museum, and myself in the present. So I think that has been my approach. It's like, how do I get myself present, as Rawz was saying, in an environment I've never been in? And at the same time, it's like, the musicians, we're listening to them in environment they've never been in. So

it's a beautiful transaction and it's also a beginning, I think, of a conversation between musicians; me and that person who was recorded. I think that's also a transaction between me and that person. And beside me, meeting Rawz as a musician, we share this commonality beside our music, what he's trying to do with music and connecting creatively with things around our community. So for me, that's been the magic in all of this, is to learn.

00:09:38:19 - 00:09:51:19

X

Basically today you're learning a little bit of listening from the body, not technically understanding the language, but just the body. This song is called Ubomi (Life).

00:11:13:07 - 00:12:28:22

X

I didn't pick anything that has traditions within my Xhosa community. I picked something that picked me, because Noel sent me a bunch, but that one was like, I want that. So I think also there's that journey of looking for something. You might realize, if you can research more on the sounds, maybe there might be connections to self there, even me, if I can dig deep to the musician that was recorded, might realized that the reason the body speaks first [rather] than my own self and my comfort, is because there's something greater than just me. So it might sound all philosophical, but the reality is, you can't be creative and not be in touch with self. So I think for me, that's what I'm enjoying. This project made me write again, because I'm always trying to organize people to write around ideas like these ones, but now I am in it, which is good.

00:12:28:22 - 00:13:48:13

Rawz

I just wanted to pick up on something you were saying about communication and language that... like music or any creativity, I look at it as a language. And it's a way of saying things that maybe our spoken language, our words can't say, but we can articulate it with a note or a sound or a colour or a shape. You know, we can articulate things that that words can't say. And so it's like, having this conversation with, whether it's a musician or a forest even, there's something that comes through that, that is more than... even if I did live in 1950 in that part of Africa, and meet that person, there's something that I can know about them through these recordings that I might not even know if I did meet them, you know? So, yeah, again, that's just another reason why this is worth doing.

00:13:48:13 - 00:16:02:19

X

And music and music or sound is a connector to life. It's like, even the cliché thing when people say 'is he alive?' they hear the pulse. Pulse is sound. So, it is that thing, even most people say, when it hits you, feel no pain. How does it hit you? Basically it's the inside. It's the natural self, the thing that

we cannot see, but you only see throughout the person who's listening eyes that there's an emotional connection. So for me, I think the sounds are beyond the sounds that you react to technically, because it's loud, but it's the emotional connection to self. So for me, I think the beauty of this whole project is that we have more to learn ourselves, as a people who are physically here, about the sounds. And I think for me, if I would have spent more time listening to more, I would have never done anything because it's, honestly speaking, it's difficult to even write with the sounds, because you know, I'm done. You know, the performance is not the performance. Like me, I'm okay. Like, what do I need to do? I'm fine. I can just write one line: 'thank you for letting me listen to the sound'. This was a very transformative process for me. Like, there was a moment that I felt like, what can I do? This is great. Like, I don't want to be downplaying on this, like, my memory is not ready to actually deal with this, but because it's so emotional, I don't want to lie. Like, it's real.

00:16:02:19 - 00:17:33:00

Rawz

Just, yeah, like you say, just listening to it is a powerful thing. And when you listen to it in a way that is, kind of, open to receiving it. I want to get quite deep now, because, it's like, it's energy. Sound is energy. And by recording it, we're capturing that energy. And then when I play it through my speakers at home, that energy is released again into my home... that time, that place, that... whatever it is... is with me. So there is a part of that time that is now as well, and that energy that that left this imprint in that wax cylinder, or whatever it is, that energy is alive again when we when we listen to that recording, and when we hear it, you know, it's vibrating our eardrum now. So that vibration that left the print in the wax cylinder is the same vibration that is now vibrating my eardrum and affecting my biology and being interpreted by my brain and giving me goosebumps and all of these things. You know, like, that's...

00:17:33:00 - 00:17:34:00

X

Time travelling.

00:17:34:00 - 00:18:29:22

Rawz

Yeah, time travelling, it is. And it's the same thing that, like all of these, whether it's a pot in a case in the museum, or whatever it is, they've all got that energy in them. You know, if I was to scratch this table now, like that is my energy being put into this table, and the energy that moved the molecules of the wood out the way for my fingernail to go into the wood, like that energy is recorded there now. And it's in every single thing in there. Every single thing in any of the collections, it's all there, it's all that kind of stored energy.

00:20:34:10 - 00:20:22:19

Dr Beth Hodgett

Does it make a difference to you - as artists who are obviously very informed on sound - listening to a digital recording of a wax cylinder versus listening to an original? And how do you think that might change or impact this process to hear the actual wax cylinder?

00:20:22:19 - 00:21:30:03

Rawz

The actual wax cylinder? So I think for me, I would love to do that, because like the more you record something there's bits of information that are lost each time it's recorded. That, you know, I guess that's part of the process that, as a hip hop artist, I guess I embrace that, and I work with that loss and that is part of the texture that I like. But it would be really special to actually directly receive those vibrations, like, closer to the source.

00:21:30:03 - 00:24:04:13

X

I think for me, it's amazing that this one recording is making us have, like, a serious conversation about the entire universe of sound. Meeting the source is the scariest moment, because, it's like, there's so much you would want, at first, to speak with the source. So I think at this moment, I can say to the one who captured that moment 'thank you for connecting me to the source', because now I'm inspired to know more. If there could be that chance to go time traveling to 100 years or 50 years [ago], and say that guy who played, maybe in these corridors, there might be someone from that family who might have never met that person, but luckily, I've met them through the sound. And I think we are meeting those people and those moments are magical, because it's like now we are given ideas to play with, to make them deliberately sounding in a certain way. So in a way, I feel part of me like a researcher, part of me being inspired to replicate and also find uniqueness in it. I think the source, it's scary, I'll be overwhelmed. I'm overwhelmed every time, when I go through things that were recorded way, way back. You feel like, this magical moment, I wish I was there, but it was not my time yet. But at this moment, I treasure the person who recorded it, because I can travel to that moment and understand why certain things that we long for, because we long for... I can use a word like authenticity. We're longing for that when we listen to music, and these recordings give you a glimpse of music not too much digitized, but raw, like with mistakes you could hear. Like okay, this person is making it. Like now when we're producing music people, when you make a mistake or a string breaks, it's like everybody sees a mistake or something wrong. You know, judgemental. These people were playing for the sake of energy.

00:24:04:13 - 00:26:37:24

Rawz

That point about the randomness, and you mentioned it a couple of times about what was classified as a bad recording, but actually, it's like, that's what you love, that's what you wanted. It's really I

guess to draw a bit of a parallel that, you know, when I make even the music that I've made using these these archives, I don't know how someone's going to interpret that. I made it with an idea of like, this is what I want to say, and this is what I want to communicate. But I don't know how someone else might be inspired by that, or how they might interpret it. So in the same way that, like this person made a recording, they were like 'ah that's a bad recording', but X loves it. In the same way that I might, you know, it's happened to me that I've made tracks and a few years later, I've happily forgotten that I made that track, and someone will come to me say, oh, yeah, that track you did. I love that track. You know, that that helped me through this time, or that inspired me to do that, or, you know, I was listening to that track when I did this painting, or whatever. So like, you don't know when you're making a recording, or when you're making a piece of art, you don't know the ripples and the echoes that it's going to have into the future, and how that's going to create new ripples and echoes, and then those ripples and echoes will create new ones. So we were talking earlier about someone who used to work in the Pitt rivers called H  l  ne La Rue, and who was an influence on Noel, and I'm sure a lot of other people who work here. And even though I never met her, the ripples that she created, that inspired Noel, that now I meet Noel, and Noel brings me here. So there's still this connection between me and H  l  ne La Rue, even though we never met. The ripples that she left behind are still here. There's still a part of her that's still here, in the same way that the energy in those recordings, when we listen to it, is still here as well. There's a lot of these circles.

00:27:54:16 - 00:28:27:19

Dr Rebecca (Becky) Martin

I love this idea of the ripples and the circles and all the people and kind of makers it brings in. You know, we've talked about environment as a maker, as well as the recorders, people who were working at museums and people who are coordinating things, as well as players of instruments, people who make instruments, people who take those recordings and remix them. And... how do you guys see yourselves within that circle of makers?

00:28:27:21 - 00:30:46:05

X

I think for me, it's an inspiration. First, I think I see myself as a student and someone who must continue archiving good sound, archiving ideas, archiving past, future, and present. So I feel like I'm a custodian of whatever was in the past, and as a creator or creative, my duty is to learn and create. So I feel myself as part of all this, I'm embracing all for the sake of finding balance, because I feel, if I choose one, there's something else within me that will feel like, oh, but you, you are a researcher. You are a musician who researches. I want to sound unique. I don't want to sound like I am just a copy and paste of something else. So through this process, I feel I'm uniquely every day being revived to sound, as I said before, authentic sound, like I'm a creator within the environment that influences me. I think these sounds are influencing the direction I've already taken. And it's sort of like, I'm a creative, revived musician, to actually produce music that can acknowledge the wrongs, acknowledge the future goodness. So I think that's the beauty. I feel like a diplomatic mediator or something, I feel like between the people who say they ethically recorded people and all those things, I feel I'm the trying to be that ethical mediator who says 'let me create from this' and

acknowledge these two people, the artist who is playing and the recorder, and we are the ones taking from both of them, and being a musician, and creating some new life.

00:30:43:23 - 00:32:00:10

Rawz

I think the one of the purposes of art is to inspire more art and and so like, I guess that's how I see myself, in that continuum that like I'm receiving art, I'm being inspired by it, I'm creating art, and I'm putting it out so other people can be inspired by it. And when I say art, I guess I'm using a quite loose definition of that, you know. I think art can be... I think sometimes is just living, and just living in a certain way can be art. So, yeah, that's kind of, that's what I want to do. And that's kind of, I guess, how I see myself in these in these circles, in these continuums, is that I'm part of continuing it. You know, I received some gifts and if I don't continue to share, to create more, and to share gifts with other people, then that stops with me. And I don't want that to happen. I don't want to be where it stops. I want to be part of it, continuing.

00:32:00:10 - 00:32:21:07

Dr Beth Hodgett

We're talking now kindof about these responsibilities towards the future almost, as well as the responsibilities towards the past, and I was quite curious how you sort of see maybe in reflection on what you've done with us the past few weeks, where do you think the future of working with museums, and the work that we should be doing as museum professionals, and the work that you as creatives would like to do with museums, where do you see that going in future?

00:32:21:07 - 00:34:39:14

Rawz

I think the role of museums in the future, especially museums like this one, is to bring people together and to show that, you know, the separation and the ways that we classify ourselves and or classify each other and put each other into boxes and all of that is ultimately, to me at least, is an illusion. I think actually places like this demonstrate that whether you're living in the coldness of North America or you're living in a jungle somewhere; you need to eat, you need to be with your family, you need to have shelter. You know, there's these things that you need. You need to create art. There's these things that we all share. We're not separate and different. You know, we might have different ways of flavouring our food or different ways of wearing our garments, but ultimately we're just part of an extended family that isn't that different at all. And I think a place like the Pitt Rivers Museum is just an undeniable example of that. You know, we called this event 'the gathering place', because it's a gathering of all of these objects, but also it's a gathering of people and cultures and time and all of these things that we can see there's actually like this one thread. Me and X made a track last night, and I'm going to try and remember one of the lines from it now. It was: 'we're divided into countries, until we see that we are one tree'. So, you know, that's the way I see it. This space, and museums, can be, and I think should be, a demonstration that we're one tree, that we're not divided, we're not separate things, we're just branches of this same tree.

00:34:39:14 - 00:36:35:22

X

It's beautiful because the whole song is about that we are not divided as a people, but there are people who give us the illusion of division. So part of the whole process, I think what I like and hope it could be an extension to more other artists with the intention to see that what is kept here exists. It has a pulse itself. Because every instrument, every sound that we've listened to was made by people, so meaning that it is alive. It is made by someone, it's not created by itself. So it still carries that person in it, whether we don't know the person, whether it's dated on time. Meaning that you're connected to a history. So, meaning that it might be seen as a museum that collects things, but it collects lives, you know, people's emotions, people's histories, people's time, and we're evolving around it. So for me, it's nice to really see something in England and say 'Okay, I see why in Makhanda, my city looks like here because of the history', but at the same time, I see [inmy] which we use for ceremonial, and then seeing a picture which we did last week that looks exactly like ceramic piece done, and it's here behind the glass. It's like, okay, we still continue. We still kneel when we drinking from these cups. So in a way, I feel the university must continue enabling creatives to interact with what is here.

00:36:35:22 - 00:38:53:03

Rawz

I love as well that the archives are still being added to, and I think that's really important that that should be continued. You know, even commissioning artists to make objects for the collection and things like that. I think the collection should be alive as well. I think there's a there's a perception that I probably held myself until fairly recently that, you know, a museum is a place where someone went out in Victorian times, collected a load of things, put them there and here they are, and nothing ever changes. And I think that's so reductive of not only history and kind of what we are, but also of the cultures and the communities that created these things that, you know, what this person or this place was in 1860 or whatever is not the same as it is now, you know. And so if we only show what it was in 1860, we're not we're not being true to ourselves. We're not being true to what's happening now. And I think adding new things to the to the collection is a way of showing that everything is changing, everything is always evolving and, you know, those inspirations that we receive from generations before us are influencing us to create new things now. And you know that conversation is continuing. That conversation will never stop. It didn't stop in 1860, or whatever, when that thing was collected, and it's not stopping now, you know. Some of the things I'm saying now, I might not think in 10 days or 10 years, or whatever. My opinions will change, depending on on what I receive and where I go and things. So, yeah, I think it's really important that... and it's a difficult thing for institutions to deal with.... but I think the collection needs to be constantly expanding, because that's what life is.

00:40:28:22 - 00:41:42:03

Dr Noel Lobley

I'm interested in how you both being here as creative fellows in residence, as it were, and able to shape work that is recorded and will be performed in situ in the space here... so when I first moved to South Africa, I was following sounds I knew nothing about... here, we've been exchanging sounds across South Africa, Oxford, US and now here in presence, and two recordings that have cropped up is a wax cylinder, recorded in 1909, we know by a government anthropologist, he didn't really know how to record, you hear the technology, the uncertainty, very extractive mode... the forest recordings, we know something about those histories, an attempt to document a whole way of life by an external collector who spent time here, he's in the sound bed. So we interact with the histories, there's students, curators here that know a lot about the collectors and these sorts of things. But there's also this concentrated maker load that's in that gallery space and you've been absorbing and around all of that as you compose and write. And so I wonder how important that's been to your process to write, and also what the composition and performance brings to the space and the collections?

00:41:42:03 - 00:43:04:21

Rawz

Yeah, it's essential for me. It's like a, it's a huge part of it that like those, you know, I mentioned earlier about this kind of ripples that feed through time, you know, and continue in this kind of cycle... like, that's all part of that. You know, there might be a pot that I never really paid attention to, that, like, you know, just glanced at out of the corner of my eye, but there's a part of that is in me, because I've interacted with that energy from it. And so whoever made that pot, a part of them is in me, and a part of them is in whatever I do from now on, you know, so, like, it's massively inspiring. And more than inspiring, there isn't a word for what it is, but inspiring, I guess, is the closest thing that. Like, it's, yeah, like it wouldn't be the same thing... if I was to take those recordings and climb up a mountain and listen to them, then I would produce something completely different, you know. So it's like, everything, everything is part of it, you know, and everything makes it what it is.

00:43:04:21 - 00:45:43:10

X

Yeah. For me, I think it's a very difficult one. but also it's relieving, you know. I think for me, if I was going to finish recording in Makhanda and not come here. I know many ways I could have done that, but my recording wouldn't be influenced by the present moment. I remember, when I arrived, I looked at the titles, and like my mind was, why? Like, kept on being like, the noise of the people and the titles, you know, so much was going on, and I took off my headphones. I took out my bag, the book was in my pocket, I took it out and put it on I felt like researching, like a researcher, like I put on points, but as much as I could remember, it's like I finished a poem about reflecting. So my writings are more like reflecting to my experience, to the environment that I was exposed to, and the environment that I had to walk around first. I saw beadworks that I think are related to [amagreha], which is spiritual people. . I see beadworks that I could feel like, I know certain things

cannot be mixed, because they might be weared by people for certain stages and stuff like, so if they're catalogued together, they are conflicting. It's like people will catalogue books based on, this is history, this is this so. But when they look, when they put things together, they put them together because these are clay pots, they don't put them okay. They have different purposes, so they should not be mixed. So there's energies that are conflicted and these, so for me, I kind of felt there's so much fighting within these things. And then there was one line in my poem that says, that speaks about the seed that you know, it's like a shattered seed, but that shattered seed, even if you shatter it, it will grow something else it's like. So I felt like I could take these things home, but these things have made life here. So my so in my poem, they like talking to me. It's like, okay, take a sip in this cup. You know, you have come a long way. You are thirsty. We fine. We have settled here. Just tell them that we're good.

And it goes like this...

00:46:27:03 - 00:49:54:03

X

So for me, I was thirsty for knowledge and understanding. So in a way, it's kind of like a visit to myself. So that's so the process is more myself, connecting to the older self to say, okay, continue to what you're thinking, on the process of trying to build a society that understands that they were these things were mixed, but try to find that little time to pair them aright. Be part of that puzzle that wants to pair them aright. So I guess for me, that's that's the feeling like, in the mountain, I wouldn't write because I would enjoy the air, and then when I get home, then I would like, reflect on it. But I've really, like, never been that creative in terms of writing music. But here, like, three poems came up just like that, and they were like, the pen didn't stutter, it moved. And I only stopped because I looked at the time, but I know that I would have continued writing. Even now I'm like feeling, it will never be complete. I cannot complete my experience, because an experience is continuously shaping. So I think for me, my moments, they're like the same recordings. That moment of me writing that poem, even if I could be asked to do it again, I won't write it the same way, because it's continuously taking shape. So hence, obviously, next time when we do this, it will be much more explosive, you know, because I think this is a small micro, you know, and that I think it is expanding inside me. I think something is growing, is like a ball that is rolling, you know, you know, when you feel home, I feel like I'm not in a new environment because of what I see and because of the people that I've met. It feels like I've been here before, because of the familiarity of things I see, like, you know, the spears, the Zulu [ulanduga] Spears, the beadwork, some [fingo], I saw like fabric. So, like, I know these things, I feel these things, you know, so, so in a way, I feel the sounds become the ceremonial existence of all what is here. So sound supersedes, in a way, because... even if there was a ceremony, there will be someone singing, a drum will be hit, even if it's something from Asia, there'll be music made. So in a way, you feel like sound supersedes, and also like, I want to listen to more recordings. I want to record more myself. And yeah, so I think, in total, for now, in this time, I think there's more exhibitions that could be done, something that could be more like a week long that could be done, so the gathering will decide. Like any gathering where there's a specific, like we are gathering for this purpose... but the gathering itself will give birth to more gatherings.

00:50:11:05 - 00:50:27:11

Dr Rebecca (Becky) Martin

Now, you might be wondering what creative fellowships like this have to do with research here at the museum. I asked Chris Morton and Beth Hodgett to tell us a bit more about the Making the Museum research project, and what these creative collaborations add to how we understand and approach our collections here at the Museum.

00:50:27:11 - 00:54:31:21

Dr Chris Morton

Yeah, the inspiration for Making the Museum was really, I guess, work I'd been doing with guys like Rawz and X and others over 20 years or so or more at the Pitt Rivers, which really remind you, like, all the time that culture is living. Cultures come together in this place in a living way even though we cover many time periods. And also, you know, it seems like an obvious thing, but collections are made by people and the museum is full of, as they talk about, like the energies of makers, but actually for the longest time museums have been mostly obsessed with their own histories, their own networks, their own intellectual histories, and the collectors, like the takers of objects. So yeah, you know it seems like an obvious thing to go back to makers, but its also a new thing. Seeing the museum as an assemblage of the agency of of many makers, you know, brings up lots of interesting questions about what it is to go into a museum and be affected by all of these objects, especially in a space like the Pitt Rivers which has 50,000 objects on display. It's almost like a unique or the best place to talk about the collective agency of objects on a museum visitor. So that's also kindof an important set of thoughts we had around the museum and how like the energies as they talk about of the makers can be transferred maybe. That concept of time travelling. You know, they talk about the energy being re-released in a musical recording, but can we trace that or look at that in other types of objects? Whether that being photographs of ancestors, you know, being resocialised for descendants and communities or objects resonating with the marks made and the craft and the skill of those original makers causing excitement and... yeah... bewilderment almost in, like, communities today. So, yeah, that's what we're doing, and we started with these guys in I think an amazing way, because fellows are all, you know, intentionally researchers who work in a creative mode and methods. Because, of course, you know, talking about the way that museums have often researched their networks in the past... you know it could have been an ethnomusicologist or an archaeologist who we brought in to research with us the collections. But you know to explore making and makers, you know, and to research it in that in that most appropriate way I think is only... can only really be done using creative researchers. And I think the way they talk about their process and things is as distinct and important a research process as any any other academic research process and they're extremely eloquent. The reason we've started off with music in the project is really not anything that we'd considered before, it's really a question of having the opportunity to do it really because Noel Lobley from the University of Virginia was here on sabbatical and you know, he's really fantastic at bringing together of creative practitioners around ethnographic archives, and this is absolutely what we wanted to do with the project. So yeah, it kindof all fell into place nicely, and you know having Noel on hand to help organise events like The Gathering and to, you know, help us logistically bring over X from South Africa was really thanks to him.

00:54:31:21 - 00:57:32:14

Dr Beth Hodgett

It might also be helpful to add a kind of little kind of introduction to Making the Museum in the sense of sort of saying that, you know, we're an AHRC-funded project, you know, we're here for 3 years and we're kind of doing various different stages of research of which, you know, the creative fellowships that we're discussing today is kind of one output of. And we're also doing database analysis to look at what information about makers do we currently have in the museum database? Are the instances where we maybe have kind of fuzzy or, you know, slight attributions that might lead us to capturing some maker identities or, you know, recovering or resurfacing them? And then also working with archival research and with the collections here in the museum to try and see again if we can kind of find out more about the people who made the museum. And there's this beautiful thing that Chris writes in our original funding proposal that kind of said, you know, Pitt Rivers didn't make the museum that bears his name, it's the people who made and used the objects and are still making and using the objects that make the museum and make it what it is. And I think that's what's really exciting about our project, that we get to tap into that. And like you know for myself, you know, coming from a background as someone who did anthropology in this museum as a for my masters but then went on to archaeology, you know I've always had that interest in the tactility. And as someone who's also a maker – you know I crochet, I knit, I sew – and bringing that kind of awareness in is something that's really interesting in this project because we are really challenging ideas of what research looks like and about research that comes from the hands and from the, kind of the body and the way that that, yeah, really makes us think differently about not just the objects that we have here but also about the ways in which we, you know, as professionals can practice. And I think one of the things I'm really interested in about the sound collections and why I'm really pleased this is one of the first things we've kind of hit the ground running with is this idea that it really does explode that idea of what it means to make because there are... in the database you know we're very often limited, we have these fields and they say sort of named performer singular, named recorder singular and you know, listening to Rawz and X talk about those sound collections and you're hearing the field archaeologist but you're also hearing... you know, Rawz talks about like hearing little insects chirp or like the sound of the wind in a recording. We hear the wax cylinder and the distortions it gives and then the recordings come back to the museum and those wax cylinders which can only be played once or twice get digitally recorded and then someone sits down, a volunteer or a curator, and edits those recordings, and sometimes separates long recordings into tracks, which again might not necessarily reflect the natural or the original way in which those sounds came together, and all of these kind of collectively kind of make the sound that we listen to when we're in the archive today and I think that's something really exciting and really kind of challenges us to again think differently about making.

00:57:32:14 - 00:58:38:06

Dr Chris Morton

Absolutely and you know I like the way they talk about making archives and contributing to archives of the future. And you know obviously museums have celebrated a lot the creators of archives and there are analogies I guess between you know creating a sound archive and creating a vitrine full of objects. It's a thing that has sources, as they say, you know within them from original makers etc. But they're also a thing apart, a thing of themselves, a creation of the museum and its processes

and there's sort of sediment layers of that over time which can be kind of excavated if you want to take an archaeological metaphor but, but also just you know revived. So that, as you say, that has enabled us to think about making in a very you know various way, in a very creative way I guess from the beginning, thinking about remaking and making is something that I think is going to be a theme throughout the whole project.

00:58:38:06 - 00:59:34:14

Dr Beth Hodgett

I don't think making is ever something that finishes, you know I do this all the time, I'll make something and I'll keep looking at it, being like I'm just going to add this bit, I'm just going to take this away, and there is always that you know dialogue with objects and that kind of push to the conversation and it's not you know.... Thinking about processes I think it's always really helpful, again as an archaeologist, you know things happening over time and these kind of different stages in the life of a place or an object and all of these kind of... in the same way that people I think, you know, we kind of archive things inside us and I couldn't point to one individual thing or moment and say that's what made me me it's a kind of a cumulation of everyone I've ever spoken to, you know the recipes that my friends taught me to cook, the kind of phrases that you know my dad used to say and all of these things kind of amalgamate and I think objects are like that, they gather these things in them and we can begin to kind of peel away those layers and look at those stories that they tell us.

00:59:34:14 - 01:01:06:11

Dr Chris Morton

I very much appreciated what they had to say about the kind of politics of representation and it's you know certainly something we wanted to explore in the project is kind of routes forward, routes past the kind of reductive and sort of stultifying positions that people can talk themselves into around museum collections, where the agency of the original communities and creatives and makers can really get sidelined and diminished as a result of you know the political discussions around the creations of the archives in the first place. So the talk about, you know, connecting with sources and energies and the agencies of those original makers really is what we hope to explore in terms of routes forward for the ethnographic museum. It's getting back to makers and away from takers, is how we phrased it. And yeah that obsession with taking, you know there are important processes that museums are going through with regard to the ethics of historical collecting, but if that stops us from looking at productive and creative routes forward then the museum's just going to turn into a sort of an archive of its own thoughts over time and I really hope they don't, you know, especially ethnographic museums, that's the danger I always feel.

01:01:06:11 - 01:01:19:14

Dr Beth Hodgett

It feels like the right project at the right time to kind of be thinking through these really big questions that are affecting not just the Pitt Rivers but pretty much every museum.

01:02:37:07 - 01:03:03:10

X

So basically this one was more of like the origins, as people. I spoke as a traveler, relating that as a people we come from far as people. So your duty as anyone who travels is to plant a seed. So my journey then was to open up the conversation and share with you this beautiful place.

01:03:17:12 - 01:04:06:00

Dr Rebecca (Becky) Martin

Thank you so much for joining us for this episode of Making the Pitt Rivers Museum. We hope you enjoyed exploring how makers like the musicians we've heard from today, can be at the heart of a new approach to museum research. You've been listening to X and Rawz, Chris Morton, Beth Hodgett, Noel Loblely and me, Becky Martin. Our episode release schedule is guided by our real time work with artists, researchers and community experts, so it might be a little irregular. If you want to make sure you hear from us as soon as we put out a new episode, make sure to subscribe, follow, or bookmark us wherever you get your podcasts.

We already know that we'll be back for our next episode with Kileni Fernando, our first San community visiting fellow here at Oxford, so we do hope you'll join us next time to hear about the stories our San collections and the work she's been doing to help us improve our museum labelling. Until then, we've been Making the Museum.