

# Multaka-Oxford

## ملتقى أكسفورد

### Spring Newsletter



January to March 2020

Issue 1

#### WELCOME

#### Multaka Spring Newsletter

The Multaka team everyone our heartfelt best wishes and hopes you are well and safe at this extraordinary time.

Our Newsletters hope to show you the depth and breadth of the Multaka programme over the History of Science Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum. From January to March 2020, the Multaka team of staff and volunteers have been doing an incredible job: public tours, training, planning a family Spring Equinox event (which we adapted virtually!) and planning a touring exhibition of the Courtauld collection. Then we had to quickly adapt to virtual engagement and volunteering as the museums closed due to COVID 19 pandemic.

The volunteers and staff continue to create the 'meeting point' online. Join us! We are on Twitter and have a fantastic blog written by everyone involved in Multaka Oxford

@MultakaO



www.multaka-oxford.tumblr.com



#### MULTAKA TOURS



Multaka Tour Guides at the Pitt Rivers and History of Science Museum have continued to delight the public and special interest groups such as Westminster MA Museums Studies students. Jenan, one of our tour guides describes her tours.

My name is Jenan. I am from Damascus, Syria.

I do the tour guide role to improve my English, meet new people, to share my stories and knowledge about my culture. I chose the Midwife netsuke to talk about. I wanted to let



visitors know about our Arabic and Muslim traditions when a child is born, for example: Al Athan (a prayer into both ears).

It was a wonderful moment when I told the visitors my brother's story when my mother delivered him with help from the Qabila (Midwife). We were around her and prayed for her and the baby.

I felt that visitors were happy and excited.

At the beginning, I was shy and nervous to give tours. But, when I read the visitors' feedback, I felt comfortable and confident. After that, I decided to do another tour to explain more about my story. By Jenan

#### FAMILY HALF TERM ACTIVITIES

Our last event before we all started staying home was a family workshop during the February half term at a community centre in an area called Rose Hill organised with the Multaka team of volunteers and staff.



The day was full of crafts for making spring flowers and jewellery. It was great to see children working hard to make spring flowers and rings for their mothers for Mothers Day.

Our half term activities were a great meeting point, a perfect Multaka: people over Oxford, many from other countries joined in, shared our cultures, shared food and came together as one group.

By Nuha

#### COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

As well as the museums supporting Multaka volunteers, the programme works within a network of community organisations and groups across Oxford. We meet 4 times a year as the Multaka Community Advisory Board and share expertise in volunteering, migration, policy and inclusion.

Members include Oxford City Council Controlling Migration Fund Manager, Employment Coordinator at Aspire Oxford, Connection Support SVPRS Deputy Team Manager & Senior Support Worker, Syrian Sisters, Oxford City Councillor Migration Champion, Head of Research Partnerships at TORCH, Volunteer Employment Advisor Asylum Welcome and Inclusion Manager Refugee Resource as well as Multaka volunteers and museum staff. By Rachel



## ISLAMIC METALWORK EXHIBITION



By Rana

My first visit to Truro and the long journey was worth every second as I caught the last day of the Courtauld Touring exhibition 'Precious & Rare' at the Royal Cornwall Museum in January 2020. I managed to see the space they had for the exhibition, the ten objects, the interaction screen and the loan box to move the objects to the next Museums.

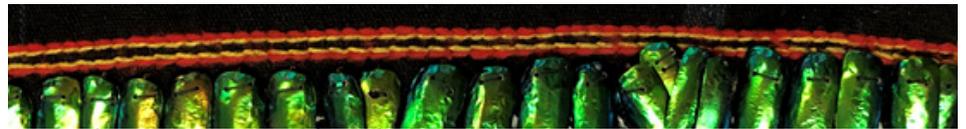
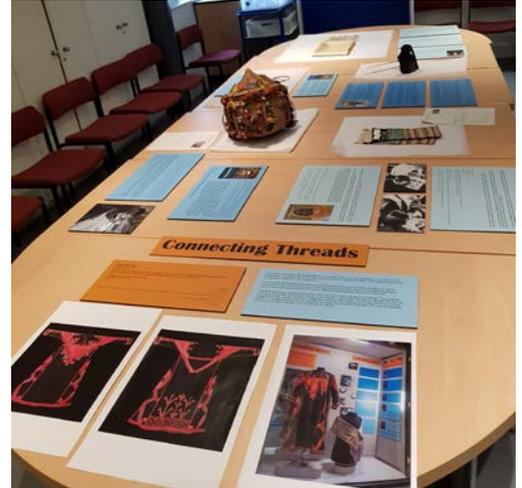
From this I created a presentation to share with Multaka volunteers and the museum's staff as we started to plan the exhibition opening in the History of Science Museum (hopefully in September 2020).

We have recruited a team of 4 volunteers to work alongside myself, Federica Gigante (Islamic Curator funded by the John Ellerman Fund), Rhiannon Jones (Head of Public Engagement) and Stephen Johnson (Head of Collections and Research) to curate the Courtauld touring exhibition. We were delighted to have the volunteers support the exhibition from the very beginning.

We planned a series of training events. The first couple of training sessions were with staff at the Ashmolean, looking at the stories objects can tell and then, how we can tell them.

Since working remotely, we have continued to work. The brilliant volunteers and staff are working on how to deliver the exhibition on our virtual platforms as well as in the museum. However, at the heart of the exhibition is cultural dialogue facilitated by the objects. Watch this space!

## UNIVERSITY OF ARTS, LONDON - CENTRAL ST MARTINS VISIT TO MULTAKA



*Visiting the Pitt Rivers Museum for the first time and learning about the Multaka project was very insightful but what touched me most was Niran's story.*

Central St Martins Student

Multaka was thrilled to host Central St Martins Fashion History & Theory BA students (University of the Arts, London) at the Pitt Rivers in February. Cally Blackman and her students visited the museum to talk about Multaka and decolonisation in action. Niran spoke about the *Connecting Threads* exhibition (May 2019 - Feb 2020) inspired by the 'Textiles of the Arab World' collection, donated by Jenny Balfour Paul. The actual display had already been taken down but we recreated it in the museum's collections office and seminar room.

The students were eager to learn how to recreate their own inclusive

approaches in the future - diversifying the lenses through which they study fashion at every step, from development to design. They particularly enjoyed speaking to our volunteer, Niran about her experiences co-producing the exhibition.

Niran explains .... *Here, I proudly realized that the exhibition "Connecting Threads" has become a subject taught and the effort that we made will not stop, but will continue and keep achieving the goal of Multaka, which is the participation of different cultures everywhere and at every event.*

By Thandi and Niran

*The choice of objects was truly incredible, however through the multi-vocal, -lens, and -layer approach it made an ever greater impact. To tell histories through material memories and experiences is heartwarming and will definitely influence my future research and writing.*

Central St Martins Student

## MULTAKA OXFORD

*'Multaka' translates from Arabic to English as 'meeting point'. Multaka-Oxford uses museums and collections as a meeting point for people to share experience, knowledge and skills. We work in a three-way partnership of staff, volunteers and local community to create a platform for cultural dialogue.*



Some of the staff and volunteers at the British Museum