

<b>Institution:</b> The University of Manchester		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> "I am Tibetan, this is my story": Developing New Museological Approaches to the Representation of Tibet		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2015-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Emma Martin	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Lecturer in Museology	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> May 2015-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  Museum representations of Tibet still perpetuate essentialised displays of the country and silence the rights of Tibetan people to self-representation, despite previous decolonisation programmes. Martin's provenance and practice-led research has resulted in changes to museum practice and policy. This research has: 1) inspired and shaped museum collecting policies and programmes in the UK and India so that they represent Tibet as a contemporary and multifaceted culture and facilitate Tibetan self-representation in museums; 2) conceptualised and contributed towards the building of a new Tibet Museum in Dharamshala, India, through collaboration with Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) staff; and 3) established new museological standards and practices that have informed museum policy in the CTA, as well as public and professional understanding more widely.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b>  The underpinning research focussed on reconstituting the roles and representation of Tibetans and Tibetan material culture in colonial-era museum collections and in contemporary museological practice. The research was practice-based and practice-led and involved collaborations with National Museums Liverpool (NML), which houses the most significant Tibet collection in Europe, and the Tibet Museum in Dharamshala, India, which is managed by the Tibetan government in exile, known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Martin has been Lead Curator for the Tibet collections at NML since 2003 and joined The University of Manchester in 2015. The strands of research documented in the case study were conceived and carried out from 2015 onwards.</p> <p><b>Researching Tibet:</b> This research asked why Tibet museum collections have remained largely untouched by the well-established processes of recovering and exposing the contested histories of colonial-era museum collections [1]. It challenged current academic discussions on colonial collecting and the paramountcy of the colonial collector by focusing on indigenous agents and their intellectual engagements with material culture [2]. It drew on previously unmined archives in the UK and India to locate episodes of Tibetan interactions with Tibetan material culture predicated on politics, diplomacy and connoisseurship rather than religion [3]. The research found that Tibetans were instrumental in collecting and translating Tibet for the colonial project. Critically, it uncovered colonial and Tibetan-language archives that record Tibetans discussing material culture using intellectual, political and connoisseurial epistemologies, later ignored by museums which instead privileged religion-based stereotypes. Applying a framework of resistance and archival/museological erasure, Martin published on the silencing of Tibetan presence and agency in the colonial archive and museum in peer-reviewed pieces [2, 3] and on the project's website and research resource, 'Object Lessons from Tibet and the Himalayas' (OLTH) [4].</p> <p><b>New Museological Approaches to Representation:</b> Martin used curation as a research method to explore how museums could begin to address: (1) the lack of Tibetan agency in museum decision-making, concerning the collection of Tibetan objects and the representation of Tibet in museum spaces; (2) enduring Western museum images of a 'timeless' Tibet; and (3) the recurrent privileging in museum representations of religion over Tibetan secular culture and political change. Martin published [1], a critical piece on her collecting programme at NML and its potential to contest uniform representations of Tibetan Buddhism in museums, by addressing the importance of collecting Tibetan contemporary art and ephemeral or mass-produced objects that highlight protest, globalisation and invented traditions. This strand of the underpinning research also involved practice-based research led by Martin in collaboration with the Tibet Museum in</p>		

Dharamshala. Using photograph albums compiled from images taken during the 1904 British Mission to Lhasa, Martin curated a bilingual (Tibetan and English) travelling exhibition titled *Capturing Tibet: Colonialism and the Camera during the Mission to Lhasa* (2017) [5]. Rather than creating a visual history of the mission, the exhibition used a thematic approach to explore both the photographs and the types of historical work visual culture can do. Critical to this was Martin's approach; placing Tibetans and their actions back into the visual narrative of this contested colonial encounter.

### 3. References to the research

1. **Emma Martin** (2017) "Collecting Tibet: Dreams and Realities", *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 30: 59-78. Available at: [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/collecting-tibet-dreams--realities\(4da40a95-27a5-492c-a559-cf8dd16950e0\).html](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/collecting-tibet-dreams--realities(4da40a95-27a5-492c-a559-cf8dd16950e0).html)
2. **Emma Martin** (2016) "Translating Tibet in the Borderlands: Networks, Dictionaries, and Knowledge Production in Himalayan Hill Stations", *Transcultural Studies* [S.I.], (July) 1: 86-120. <https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.ts.23538>
3. **Emma Martin** (2019) "Tibetan Materiality versus British 'Ornamentalism': Diplomacy, Objects, and Resistance in the Imperial Archive", in Lipokmar Dzüvichü and Manjeet Baruah (eds.), *Objects and Frontiers in Modern Asia: Between the Mekong and the Indus*, London: Routledge. 68-89. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261909>
4. **Emma Martin**, Trine Brox, Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen and Diana Lange (2017) *Object lessons from Tibet and the Himalayas* (OLTH) [online research resource] <https://objectlessonsfromtibetblog.wordpress.com/>
5. **Emma Martin** (curator) (14 April-24 May 2017) *Capturing Tibet: Colonialism and the Camera during the Mission to Lhasa*, The Tibet Museum, Temple Complex, McLeod Ganj, H.P., India [exhibition]. Documented by Martin in 'A Curatorial Reflection' at: <https://objectlessonsfromtibetblog.wordpress.com/2017/04/18/capturing-tibet-colonialism-and-the-camera-14-april-24-may-2017>. Now a Tibet Museum travelling exhibition: <https://tibetmuseum.org/exhibitions/travelling-exhibition/young-husband-expedition/>

All published research has undergone rigorous peer review and/or is published in a professional body's journal of record.

### 4. Details of the impact

The research made a contemporary and politically active Tibet visible in museums, particularly by engaging Tibetans in the research process and supporting the refugee community in producing its own public histories. Impact was achieved through Martin's collaborative work with Tibetan exile groups in UK and India, museums and Tibetan government agencies, to develop and support new museological approaches and build capacity. For example, between March 2018 and July 2019, Martin ran five workshops and seminars for Tibetan and European colleagues in Manchester, London and Dharamshala (attended by more than 50 people). The open access on-line platform [4] and wide dissemination of the research via professional forums provided further pathways to impact.

The new practices, policies and initiatives supported and inspired by this research are as follows:

#### 1. Modelling New Representations of Tibet in Museums

##### a. *Creating a Tibetan museology in exile through collaboration with the Tibet Museum*

The original Tibet Museum opened in 2000 in Dharamshala district, North-western India. It is one of seven museums across India supported by the CTA. As the official museum of the CTA's Department of Information and International Relations, its primary purpose is to educate non-Tibetans on why Tibetans fled into exile in India and about Human Rights violations in Tibet. *Capturing Tibet: Colonialism and the Camera during the Mission to Lhasa* (2017) [5] was the Museum's first international collaboration. This exhibition, and particularly Martin's approach of making Tibetans and their actions central to the visual narrative, opened up new visual histories - that represent Tibetans as actively resisting rather than as victims - and created new awareness among both Museum staff and visitors. Many Tibetans who visited the exhibition were unaware of the photographs taken during the British invasion. [text removed for publication] In 2018, the President of the CTA announced plans for a new Tibet Museum. At 1,200 m<sup>2</sup>, it was larger in scale

and size and would include 'state of the art' museum practice to interpret aspects of Tibet's culture and history beyond the size limitations of the original Museum. This was daunting for the staff, who are bureaucrats with no museological training and who ran the original Museum with few resources, no long-term planning or institutional policies. In December 2018, six months into the new Tibet Museum project (and based on the success of [5]), the CTA invited Martin to become 'Overall Curator'.

**The new Tibet Museum expected to open in December 2020, but has been delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Martin's research underpins the design of the new Museum. Critically, the research changed the narratives and displays that were originally planned for the Museum. Prior to the collaboration, Museum staff had focussed on producing displays of Tibetan culture that self-othered [A.i], an established CTA position used to meet the imagined expectations of western visitors and financial supporters. Martin instead developed an interpretative strategy for the new displays that focussed on privileging Tibetan voices and actions. Between January 2018 and April 2019, Martin led staff training on text writing and visits to memorial museums in India to critique current practice. Tashi Phuntshok, Director of the Tibet Museum sites, notes that "[Martin] *changed our interpretative approach. She asked us to build displays around important objects rather than facts, figures and statistics and she guided us in how to write text with a strong personal and political message. As a result, we wrote from a first-person plural perspective reminding our visitors at every turn that this museum was made by Tibetans and for the Tibetan cause. With her guidance we have included the voices of many ordinary Tibetans through recorded testimonies, giving a personal and emotional account of our exile and what happened and continues to happen to our people in Tibet.*" [B] Martin also facilitated critical reflection on the Museum's collecting practices and worked collaboratively with staff to establish new practices that centred on collecting objects politically and historically charged with documented donor testimonies rather than religious objects that represented a single aspect of Tibet's culture [A.ii, A.iii].

The research and collaboration with the Tibet Museum resulted in displays that offer a radical challenge to the stereotypical tropes and expectations consistently found in Tibet displays across the world. In June 2020, the innovative approach to collecting developed through this collaboration was recognised through the award of a British Museum/Arcadia Fund Endangered Material Knowledge Programme grant (GBP14,900) [C]. The grant allows Martin and the new Tibet Museum to establish an Archive of Tibetan Material Knowledge that brings Tibetan voices into the collection archives of the British Museum and the new Tibet Museum.

#### **b. Shaping collecting practices, policy development and displays at NML**

Martin's research since 2015 has shaped the strategic development of the Tibet collection at NML. The findings in [1], for example, contributed to the embedding of contemporary collecting into NML practices, including new acquisitions in 2018. The implications of this change are substantial and long-term for NML. As the Head of World Museum states, "[Martin] *directed the development of the collection into new and innovative areas, acquiring contemporary art and mass-produced objects that not only challenge the public's romantic perceptions of Tibet, but as a museum service committed to advocacy and activism, [Martin's] decision to collect Tibet thematically and in a way that speaks to issues of globalisation, displacement and societal change has changed our understanding of how we will collect in the future.*" [D] A crucial initiative at NML is Martin's work with Tibetans in the UK to shape the future of its collection. NML has formed a collecting panel that will acquire objects and advise the museum on future purchases [D]. This represents a significant shift in practice, as NML no longer collects unprovenanced, representative examples of Tibetan culture, but instead focuses on objects that speak to contemporary Tibetan concerns. [text removed for publication]

This collaborative, Tibetan-centred approach is fundamental to the development of new collecting policies at NML. This work, ongoing but delayed by COVID-19, will shape the Tibet collection in the coming years [D]. Martin's work with the Tibetan advisory panel has already been recognised in several NML strategic documents, including its Diversity Plan, a response to the Black Lives Matter movement, and World Museum's Action Plan [D]. The work is also informing the

development of a major exhibition, *Tibetan: Dreams and Realities*, which opens at the Walker Art Gallery in 2024. This will be the first exhibition of its kind to historicise and politicise a colonial-era Tibetan object collection and will be curated in conjunction with the Tibet collecting panel, colleagues from the Tibet Museum, and Tibetan diaspora organisations [D].

The process of collecting contemporary objects and materials which speak to historical collections [1] has been taken up by other NML curators. The research influenced a funded commissioning programme led by the Curator of the Africa collections at NML. This programme worked with UK artists of Africa heritage, using NML collections as its focus. The new commissions are now part of the display at World Museum [D]. Martin's research is also informing the reconceptualisation of the World Cultures gallery at World Museum, which through Martin's leadership is being transformed into a space of "collaborative, dialogue and ideas-based displays" that "reconceive what it means to display anthropology collections in UK museums" [D].

## 2. Shaping CTA Museum Policy

The research inspired long-term changes to strategic planning at governmental level. Significantly, CTA has committed to long-term strategic support for professionalisation. In September 2018, Martin was invited to speak on the future of Tibetan exile museums at the 'Five-Fifty', a major state of the nation conference held in Dharamshala [F.i]. The conference defined and presented the CTA's key strategic priorities for the short (5 years) and long term (50 years). Museums, although not originally part of the programme, were added to the strategic priorities and the conference programme following Martin's collaboration with the Tibet Museum and subsequent discussions with senior CTA officials. Consequently, Martin wrote the proposition paper that guided the discussion and gave a paper on the value of collections and museum professionalisation to the CTA, which was published in the conference proceedings [F.i]. Martin's lecture outlined the harm that a lack of professional practice has wrought on the CTA's ability to collect and care for historically-situated collections. It was attended by 250 exile Tibetans from across the globe and watched by approximately 24,000 people via livestreaming [F.ii]. Following the conference, the CTA established an MA scholarship in Museology for a Tibetan student [F.iii] (the recipient has now graduated from India's premier programme at the National Museum Institute and is working at the Tibet Museum in Dharamshala), and released a report that included several of Martin's recommendations, including establishing an advisory body of museum professionals and scholars, and providing greater training and support for Tibet Museum staff [F.i].

## 3. Enhancing Understanding among Museum Professionals and Students

The research has improved international understanding of the significance of Tibetan collections and representation in museums. Martin has been invited to present her research at professional forums for curators and practitioners, including at the National Trust's Powis Castle (2020), the AHRC Baggage and Belonging project led by National Museums Scotland and hosted by the National Army Museum (2020), Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (2019), Indian Art Circle, SOAS (2019) and Museum Ethnographer's Group (2015). The latter paper was subsequently published in the organisation's journal of record for Museum Ethnography professionals in 2016 [1]. Martin and Tashi Phuntsok convened a panel and gave a joint paper on the project at the International Association of Tibet Studies conference, INALCO, Paris (2019) [G] and colleagues at the Tibet Museum have also presented this research when they hosted the 2019 Sites of Conscience Asia Forum in Dharamshala, India, which included museum professionals from nine Asian countries.

The research also impacted on wider curatorial practice and shaped important contemporary discussions about heritage and colonialism. Martin was part of an advisory panel for the British Museum's *Tantra: Enlightenment to Revolution* exhibition (24 September 2020 to 24 January 2021) [H]. The British Museum had no knowledge of the colonial histories of significant objects in the exhibition prior to Martin's involvement. She advised on provenance research methods for Tibetan collections that were incorporated into the exhibition. This relationship will be sustained through the award of a Collaborative Doctoral Award, which Martin will co-supervise with the British Museum beginning in September 2021. The awardee will research the British Museum's Tibet collections with the aim of privileging Tibetan ontologies and epistemologies in the

documentation and display of Tibetan Buddhist objects at the British Museum. In 2019 Martin was invited as a core member of the Tibet Collections Linked Open Data (LoD) project based at the University of Columbia, which aims to digitise and release Tibet collections under an open license, creating wider access to Tibetan collections and research. Since September 2017, she has been a visiting lecturer at the University of Copenhagen where 30 MA students annually write projects based on her research and her publications are core readings in the module 'Curating Cultures' in SOAS's MA programme in Museums, Heritage and Material Studies.

Public access has increased through dissemination of research publications, several of which are Open Access. For example, [2] has been downloaded 5,491 times since publication in July 2016. OLTH [4] went live in 2017 and stores 18 pages relating to Tibetan and Himalayan object and museum-related research. By November 2020, [4] had received 4,716 separate visitors from 82 countries (largest visitor groups from the USA, UK and India) and 9,908 views [1]. [text removed for publication]

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. [text removed for publication]
- B. Testimonial from Director, Tibet Museum, Dharamshala, India (11 September 2020), describing the impact of the collaboration with Martin.
- C. British Museum/Arcadia Fund Endangered Material Knowledge Programme project: <https://www.emkp.org/clothing-the-14th-dalai-lama-endangered-tibetan-material-knowledge-in-exile/>
- D. Testimonial from Head of World Museum, Liverpool, UK (15 December 2020), corroborating impacts on NML.
- E. [text removed for publication]
- F. (i) 5/50 Strategic Report on Future of Tibetan Exile Governance and conference programme documenting Martin's participation (2019); (ii) Facebook link to live streaming of 5/50 conference: <https://www.facebook.com/CTATIBETTV/videos/314938539267824/>; (iii) advert for the CTA scholarship.
- G. Martin and Tashi Phuntsok contributing to the IATS conference (2019): <https://tibetmuseum.org/the-tibet-museum-attends-15th-seminar-of-the-iats/>
- H. British Museum, *Tantra: Enlightenment to Revolution* (24 September 2020-24 January 2021) <https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/tantra-enlightenment-revolution>, with Martin's participation in consultation activity acknowledged in the exhibition text: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Tantra enlightenment to revolution large print guide web.pdf](https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Tantra%20enlightenment%20to%20revolution%20large%20print%20guide%20web.pdf) (p. 161).
- I. Analytics for the *Object Lessons from Tibet and the Himalayas* [4] website (report generated 4 January 2021; views recorded in 2021 excluded above).
- J. [text removed for publication]