

## Fitzwilliam Museum's appointment of two new Deputy Directors heralds period of transformational change

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Luke Syson, the Director of Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum, announces today the organisation is entering a period of transformational change.

Mr Syson and the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum have appointed two acclaimed museum professionals, Karen Livingstone and Neal Spencer, who will join the Fitzwilliam in February 2021 as new Deputy Directors to be part of the team to lead the Museum through this period of change. During the pandemic the Fitzwilliam built and launched a new Beta website to public consultation, alongside a new series of 'art in lockdown' podcasts, as it seeks to broaden and modernise its digital offer.

As the principal museum of Cambridge University and the largest cultural venue in East Anglia, the Fitzwilliam is a crucial bridge between Cambridge University, and the rest of the world, with an international reputation for extraordinary research, world-class exhibitions, sector-leading public engagement and over half a million artefacts and works of art spanning centuries and cultures.

Karen Livingstone and Neal Spencer will play major roles in making this change happen, rejuvenating the Fitzwilliam, not just as the University's leading visitor attraction, but as an international resource.

Karen Livingstone will be the Fitzwilliam's first Deputy Director for Masterplan, Exhibitions & Major Display Projects. She will lead a new Division, ultimately responsible for the Museum's ambitious redevelopment and Masterplan. The Fitzwilliam's Masterplan aims to transform the building and displays to ensure the Museum functions as a new social space for the region, an innovative cultural and research asset for the University of Cambridge and its great collections, and an even more extraordinary place to interact with art and history. She will play the leading role in the creation of new displays and enhancement of existing public galleries, creating a dynamic balance between the great historical buildings and the new.

Karen joined the Science Museum Group in 2011 as its first Director of Masterplan and Estate, responsible for developing and delivering an ambitious Masterplan for each of the museums in the Group, creating new galleries and public spaces at all of them, and carrying out a radical review of the Group's property holdings across the very diverse and geographically spread estate.

She has planned and delivered Masterplans at each of the five museums in the group, most notably the Science Museum in London, which was recently declared a winner of the Art Fund Museum of the Year prize in recognition of the opening of two exceptional new permanent galleries: Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries, and Science City 1550 - 1800: The Linbury Gallery.

Karen Livingstone said: ***"I am thrilled to be joining the Fitzwilliam Museum at the beginning of a new chapter in its history and to play my part in shaping its future through a Masterplan and reinvigorated exhibition programme. I am particularly looking forward to getting to know my new colleagues, the collections, and the communities of the University and Cambridge more widely."***

Dr Neal Spencer will occupy another critical new role: Deputy Director for Collections and Research. He will provide strategic and practical leadership for the Collections Division and for research and teaching in the Museum, as well as shaping a curatorial vision that creates and drives forward the Fitzwilliam's new research strategy. As Chief Curator, he will be responsible for the management of all the Fitzwilliam's curators, who have recently moved to academic contracts, and thus officially become part of the research family of the University of Cambridge. He will be responsible for the development and management of all research projects, working with a wide and diverse community of scholars and other experts in Cambridge and beyond, right across the humanities and the sciences.

Neal is currently Keeper of Nile Valley & Mediterranean Cultures at the British Museum, where he has shaped and led his teams in delivering exhibitions, collections-based research and archaeological fieldwork relating to Egypt, Sudan and the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Neal has also played a key role in initial work towards the redisplay of the ancient world collections, as part of the British Museum's Masterplan.

Neal Spencer said: ***"I am very excited at this opportunity to join the extraordinary Fitzwilliam Museum, and to start work with colleagues across Cambridge University and beyond. I am confident we will build upon considerable existing strengths to use the collection and the many stories embedded within it for the benefit of diverse audiences across Cambridge, the UK and internationally. The collections and staff of the Fitzwilliam, and the whole University, provide an incredible platform for inspiring, informing and challenging audiences."***

Karen and Neal will join Luke Syson, Director and Marlay Curator, who came to the Fitzwilliam from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2019, and Kate Carreno, who has led the Museum's Central Services, Operations and Engagement Divisions since her appointment in 2008, and is now taking on the new role of Deputy Director, Public Engagement and Partnerships. The Museum is currently recruiting a new Deputy Director, Operations.

Luke Syson said: ***"I am completely thrilled that Karen and Neal will be bringing their creativity and scholarship, their infectious passion for museums, and their tremendous records of achievement, to the University of Cambridge. In these difficult days, it is really good to be planning a Fitz for the future. Karen and Neal will be key to the success of all our research, display and building projects, working with a great collection and a terrific team, to make a museum that is already remarkable a truly extraordinary one."***

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## Notes to Editors

- **Fitzwilliam Museum new podcast series: In My Mind's Eye: the museum explored in lockdown**

The In My Mind's Eye podcast series, is a response to the national closure of Museums and Art galleries during lockdown in Spring/Summer 2020. The Fitzwilliam invited Ali Smith, Halima Cassell, Issam Kourbaj, Jackie Kay and Matt Smith to talk about how works of art continue to exist in our memories and imaginations even when we can no longer visit artworks directly.

The recordings with the artists and writers, about their recollections of works of art from the Fitzwilliam, share memories and stories from the Scottish highlands to Pakistan, from soap production in Aleppo, to how a 19th century drawing is now seen in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. The first two episodes are here: <https://fitzmuseum.libsyn.com/> the next three will go live every Wednesday of lockdown until Nov 25.

- **New Beta Website**

The Fitzwilliam Museum's new digital presence #fitzvirtual invites the public to help co-curate a new Beta website and online collections: <https://beta.fitz.ms>

- **Karen Livingstone**

Karen Livingstone began her career as a curator, first at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums and then the Victoria and Albert Museum. She curated the V&A's landmark 2005 exhibition 'International Arts and Crafts' then became Head of Projects, where she built up a track record of directing and delivering multiple award-winning capital projects. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and has been an Honorary Research Fellow of the V&A, and a Trustee of the Crafts Study Centre, Farnham. Karen maintains an active interest in curatorial collections and research, scholarship and publishing. Her recent books include: C.F.A. Voysey: Arts and Crafts Designer (V&A, 2016).

Karen Livingstone has led multiple capital and exhibition projects in museums and collaborated with architects and designers including Feilden Fowles, Amanda Levete, Zaha Hadid, Eva Jiřičná, Hat Projects, Carmody Groarke, Coffey Architects, Wilkinson Eyre, Universal Design Studios, Haworth Tompkins and Stanton Williams.

- **Neal Spencer**

Neal has over twenty years' experience of museological and archaeological projects in Egypt, Sudan and India, including training, documentation, excavation and community outreach. Following a PhD (University of Cambridge, 2000) focusing on first millennium BC temples in Egypt, Neal joined the British Museum as a curator of Late and Ptolemaic Period collections.

He has published on 4th century BC temples, ancient lived experience and the cultural entanglement of Nubia and Egypt in the late Bronze Age. Neal has directed multidisciplinary fieldwork projects at Amara West ([www.britishmuseum.org/AmaraWest](http://www.britishmuseum.org/AmaraWest)), Kom Firin and Samanud in Egypt, and worked at Amarna, Sais and Qasr Ibrim. A recently completed project empowered a northern Sudanese rural community to own, shape and curate their own sustainable display space, the only one within a 300km radius.

Neal launched the British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP) in 2008 to create a global network of early- and mid-career museum professionals, now comprising 301 Fellows from 43 countries and 141 institutions across the Middle East, Africa, South and East Asia. He has been the strategic lead on Research Space, working with Digital Humanities experts to reformulate the relationship between the museum and the digital, better to capture knowledge and linked data across different institutions and disciplines. He has served as board member for the Museo Egizio (Turin), the Griffith Institute (Oxford), the Freud Museum London and the Egypt Exploration Society (London), and is currently chair of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society.

### **About the Fitzwilliam Museum**

Founded in 1816 the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Major Partner Museum programme, funded by The Arts Council. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation. [www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk) / <https://beta.fitz.ms>

The Fitzwilliam Museum is closed to the public from Thursday 5 November to Wednesday 2 December inclusive.

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB | Free admission**

NORMALLY OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00; CLOSED: 24-26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday

**Business Partners** The Museum is supported by our Business Partners during 2020; TTP Group & Brewin Dolphin.