Ashmolean Museum

20/09/2009

One of the world's leading museums, the Ashmolean in Oxford, will reopen (Sat 7 Nov 2009) having completed a multi-million pound redevelopment. The project has been funded with a £15million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Additional major support has been received from the Linbury Trust, along with numerous trusts, foundations and individuals.

The new building, designed by award-winning Rick Mather Architects, will provide the Ashmolean with 100% more display space. Located to the north of Charles Cockerell's original Museum built in 1845, it comprises 39 new galleries, including 4 temporary exhibition galleries, a new education centre, state-of-the-art conservation studios, and Oxford's first rooftop restaurant The Ashmolean Dining Room. In the Cockerell Building, the newly refurbished galleries of Western Art will reopen after 10 months of closure.

Christopher Brown, Director of the Ashmolean, said: "From the outset, our ambition has been to create not just an improved and expanded version of Britain's oldest public museum, but something significantly different in kind: a new way of showcasing the Ashmolean's remarkable collections, for the benefit of the widest possible audience."

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "The Ashmolean is like a dear old friend to the people of Oxfordshire - a familiar landmark in the heart of academia. Now fully refurbished, this wonderful building has maintained its original charm but also taken on a fresh, new energy and openness. At the Heritage Lottery Fund, we're really passionate about ensuring our heritage is enjoyed and understood by everyone. The completion of this project is a huge step towards achieving that aim."

Inside the new galleries, the Ashmolean presents a redisplay of the collections. The Museum's curators have worked with leading design company Metaphor to create the innovative strategy Crossing Cultures Crossing Time, enabling visitors to discover how civilisations developed as part of an interrelated world culture. Objects' stories will be told by tracing the journey of ideas and influences through time and across continents, transforming the way the Ashmolean's rare and beautiful objects are understood.

Themed galleries on the lower ground floor explore the connections between objects and activities common to different cultures, such as money, reading and writing, and the representation of the human image. The floors above are arranged chronologically, charting the development of the ancient and modern worlds. Orientation galleries on each floor introduce the key themes, illuminating the many connections and comparisons which bring the past to life. Crossing Cultures Crossing Time will highlight the strengths of the Museum's collections, and create a first-class educational environment.

Nicholas Barber, Chairman of the Ashmolean, said: "Renowned for our collections, the Ashmolean has always held a strong position on the cultural map. But now, with a magnificent new building and inspiring displays, the Museum has been transformed into one of the world's great cultural jewels."

The Ashmolean is a teaching and research department of the University of Oxford. It produces research and publications of the highest standard in the academic fields of art history, history, archaeology, numismatics and Oriental studies. Education has always been central to the work of the Ashmolean, not just as a resource for scholars but

seeking to awaken a lively interest in all visitors.

Professor Andrew Hamilton, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, said: "The new Ashmolean is a powerful statement of the way in which Oxford's dynamic future is being fuelled by the richness of its past. For generations the Ashmolean has provided an outstanding resource for teachers, students and researchers--as well as a remarkable treasure trove and source of inspiration for visitors of all ages. Today as a result, of the effort, commitment, and generosity of so many - and as part of the Campaign For Oxford - the special role of the Ashmolean has been secured for generations to come."

Public opening weekend: 7 November 10am to 10pm, 8 November 10am to 6pm

Admission to the Museum is free.

Notes to editors

The Heritage Lottery Fund
Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK. For more information, please call Katie Owen, HLF Press Office on tel: 020 7591 6036 / 07973 613 820.

Oxford Thinking: The Campaign for the University of Oxford
The Ashmolean Museum is one of a number of major building projects that form "Oxford Thinking: The Campaign for the University of Oxford", along with the other major themes of support for students and support for academic posts and programmes. The Campaign was launched in May 2008 with a minimum goal of £1.25 billion and is the largest fundraising Campaign in European university history. The current Campaign total is £679million.

Further information

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