

Received: 4 March 2024 Accepted: 12 April 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33182/joph.v4i3.3286>

Cameron, F.R. (2024). *Museum Practices and the Posthumanities: Curating for Planetary Habitability*. Routledge.

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In the nascent field of posthuman museum studies, Fiona R. Cameron cuts a singular figure. Since their conceptualisation of the ‘liquid museum’ in Andrea Witcomb and Kylie Message’s 2015 collection *Museum Theory* (Cameron, 2015), Cameron has been a crucial driver in theorising and applying posthumanism to the multifarious field of museum governance and practice. Their work navigates and encompasses curatorial documentation practices (Cameron, 2018), digital data and heritage (Cameron, 2021), as well as the museum’s complicity in the conditions of the global Covid-19 pandemic (Cameron, 2022). *Museum Practices and the Posthumanities: Curating for Planetary Habitability* (2024) presents Cameron’s– and indeed, anyone’s– most comprehensive thinking, writing, and action around posthuman museum practices yet.

For those uninitiated to the practicalities and complexities of museum practice, Cameron’s book arrives at a time when many museums– across disciplines, countries, and contexts– are facing uncertain futures. With the Covid-19 pandemic inducing the temporary, and in some cases permanent, closure of museums, there is a need for a radical rethinking of the role of the museum in relation to our forever-changed communities. Cameron (2024) effectively contextualises this urgent need for change, drawing attention to the implicated position of the museum institution – ‘dominated by discourses and practices of modern humanism in which the concerns of capital growth, progress, social and technological advancement, hubris, extraction, species logics and colonial domination predominate, and often without reflection’ (3). As Cameron (2024) urges, it is incumbent on museums to take an active role in rethinking museum practices and policies in ways that debunk ‘the illusion of anthropocentrism as a locus of control’ (2). To do so requires a radical reformulation of the museum that rejects its inherited humanist tendencies and embraces posthumanism as a way to reconnect with other species.

This radical reformulation is not just an academic exercise but encompasses a host of practical actions with the potential of ‘opening up worldviews to communitarian entanglement and facilitating eco-behavioural change’ (Cameron, 2024, 151). Cameron’s monograph excels in providing such practical examples of posthuman museum practices that reflect the realities of museum leadership and governance. In an unflinching critique of what Cameron (2024) describes as ‘museological nationalism’ and ‘museological globalization’ (120), Cameron cannily identifies the humanist trappings of the museum sector’s enrolment in international climate policy interventions such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Agreement (PA). The ubiquity of

* This article was published through an open-access model that charged no article processing fees.

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these policy interventions as a part of museums' responses to climate change are epitomised by the inclusion of the SDGs in museum sector professional development and networks, including the International Council of Museums (McGhie, 2020), MuseumNext (Charr, 2022), and the Inclusive Museum (2024) conference on Museum, Inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals. As Cameron identifies, such policies double down on the assumption that elements of the ecological environment – such as air quality and pollution levels – can be masterfully manipulated by human activity. Their global roll-out expounds a colonial logic in which 'western humanism, and its enrolment in the PA and in museums, is an ideology that is profoundly ecologically indifferent to human species embeddedness' (Cameron, 2024, 122). Cameron's unpicking of the incompatibility of humanist approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation policies and posthumanism go far beyond the museums, with practical implications for posthuman scholars and practitioners across civil society.

Alongside this effective appraisal of posthuman practice at a macro level, Cameron's attention to technical detail, or the micro level, is impressive albeit less impactful. The chapter dedicated to C analysis of the atmospheric conditions found in samples from wooden components in cultural collections may only attract experts in this specific field, however, for the posthumanist scholar, it exemplifies the kind of practical and pragmatic work made possible when applying posthumanism in and for professional fields. The highly technical methods that Cameron outlines connect seemingly singular objects to multiple histories, agencies, and futures through carbon economies. In Cameron's words, they position 'objects as distinct forms of human-non-human biochemical relations that occasion possibilities of new material and climatic attunement. Cameron's application of posthumanism here is not dense elitist abstraction but detailed and atomically defined, and able to map out practical steps that are (so) necessary to ensure "planetary habitability"' (Cameron, 2024).

With its focus on museological 'globalism', Cameron's research necessarily draws on work and research with large national and international institutions, with a disciplinary focus on history, natural history, science, and technology museums. The result is a body of work that animates collections and museum governance, but perhaps neglects other agents that make the museum, including its staff, volunteers, artists and audiences. It also lacks a consideration of the funding conditions that often limit museums to humanist forms of engagement and institutional policy (including climate commitments in the form of the SDGs and PA). As they stand, the current financial context of public museums limits their posthumanist possibilities. This may be particularly true of the science museums with which Cameron engages. As a scholar whose posthuman museum studies have developed in the context of a local contemporary art museum, it seems there is much that science and technology museums could learn from their artistic counterparts, and vice versa. This is owing to the avant-garde perspectives of artists and curators who – as Rosi Braidotti (2019) reminds us – "have licence to skilful critical experimentations" and "enjoy a degree of freedom with both form and content that academics can only dream of" (79). By virtue of being more connected with artists and their avant-garde practice and ideas, the art museum feels further ahead of history and science museums in terms of posthuman practices. They have more freedom – like the artist – to engage posthumanly than their traditional science counterparts. Cameron's work may have something to gain from engagement with smaller, local, and art-based museums, as much as art museums would gain from deep engagement with Cameron's boundary-pushing work.

This is particularly true of Cameron's introduction of adaptable posthuman concepts like 'eco-curating' which are as pertinent to the contemporary art museum as to the historic science museum. In eco-curating, "new notions of community emerge and comprise entities that are more-than-



human and other-than-human. Earthly processes such as the atmosphere, biosphere, oceans, and ice, become critical stakeholders; they become kin in relationships and demand respect and care” (Cameron, 2024, 10). This form of curating is not limited to human agency but happens “in collaboration with all manner of vital coordinates, forming intermeshed alliances with them as a new type of curatorial eco-logic” (Cameron, 2024, 33). Through ‘eco-curating,’ Cameron envisages a new form of museum governance which holds the institutions and their communities accountable for the creations that they have benefited from and continue to uphold in the face of anti-colonial demands and climate collapse. That Cameron’s detailed work scratches the surface of these complexities and possible solutions points to the huge potential that posthumanist approaches have in museums’ futures, alongside a burgeoning field of posthuman museum studies.

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