



# Aura™

**A** ASHMOLEAN  
MUSEUM  
OXFORD

## BRINGING THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST TO LIFE

Thanks to the possibilities of AV technology, visitors to The Ashmolean's Ancient Middle East Gallery can now benefit from an immersive experience which enriches both their understanding and their enjoyment.



Immersive AV for  
optimal engagement



Film precisely projected  
onto artefacts



Introductory video,  
soundscapes and  
AV pods



## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The Ashmolean Museum opened its doors in 1683, making it Britain's first public museum. Its original collection of art and archaeology was gifted to Oxford University by Elias Ashmole, after whom the Museum is named. Many famous objects formed part of the early collections and can still be seen in The Ashmolean today, including the mantle (cloak) of Pocahontas' father, Powhatan, and a lantern that is said to be the one used by Guy Fawkes in his attempt to blow up Parliament.

In this latest project for The Ashmolean, the brief was to make the collections within the new Ancient Middle East Gallery more accessible and engaging using technology in innovative ways, across five separate zones.

It was also important that the technology used would have longevity, and could be replicated in other galleries within the Museum in future.

As well as the outcome-related challenge – to create a vibrant and engaging experience to entice and inform visitors – there was also a specific installation challenge. With the precise set-up of projectors and placement of ONELAN players having a significant impact on the end result, it was necessary to coordinate with other trades to achieve perfection.

## SOLUTION

An introductory video is projected onto the wall by a WUXGA (1920x1200) resolution laser projector with network monitoring and control (driven by a nearby ONELAN signage player), just by the entrance to the Ancient Middle East Gallery. The projected imagery is situated opposite a low-tech pod of exhibits comprising seating, note cards, magnifying glasses and a hands-on activity station.

This video offers a 'teaser trailer' for the fascinating artefacts inside, in a more dynamic and appealing way than a traditional text-based introduction panel. A soundscape audio track helps to create an atmosphere, with the volume under the control of the visitor services assistants to make sure the sound levels through the pair of AMC Power Box speakers are always appropriate.

Close to various key exhibits in the Gallery, exhibit pods of varying sizes and specifications offer visitors the chance to immerse themselves in a greater depth of information. Some feature LCD screens, others NEC, and some have AV incorporated, but all are driven by ONELAN digital signage players. Local induction loops are integrated wherever there is an option for visitors to pick up a headset and listen to relevant audio – for example, to hear someone reading the epic of Gilgamesh in the original Sumerian language.

A particularly innovative AV solution helps bring the stories on a set of stone tablets to life for visitors. A ceiling-mounted WUXGA (1920x1200) resolution laser projector, driven by a ONELAN retail signage player, projects images onto the set, showing how they were once colourfully painted.

Working closely with other tradespeople, against the backdrop of COVID-related staff shortages, the Aura team delivered the high quality of installation required to ensure the end result was perfect. The placement of the ceiling-mounted projectors was particularly important to image quality and a polished effect – especially where the images needed to overlay artefacts mounted on the wall. Rigid mounts ensure that there will be no movement, maintaining the precision of the original installation.

“ ***The aim of this gallery refurbishment was to find new and stimulating ways to bring the objects and their stories to life. AV has done a great job in helping us to achieve this goal. Visitors can now learn about the Ancient Middle East and its objects in engaging and entertaining ways, through video, sound, projected images, and scrolling information screens. The soundscape also provides a relaxing area where visitors can pause to reflect on the objects around them. Aura's guidance and expertise on this project were invaluable in helping us to achieve our objectives, and we couldn't be more delighted with the results.*** ”

Hannah Manson, Project Manager  
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

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