



Photographs by Lande co-curator Caroline Gregory

“The exhibit redefines Calais as a (post)colonial space, where displaced people from the former British informal empire in Sudan, Eritrea and Afghanistan gather in order to try to claim asylum”

## Reframing Archaeology and Anthropology in Museums

What are the temporal, political, and imaginative limits of archaeology? How might archaeologists apply their discipline to the most recent past or our contemporary world? Dan Hicks on how a new exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum explores these questions and seeks to reframe how we think about archaeology and anthropology in museums today

The new temporary exhibition at Oxford University's Pitt Rivers Museum – *Lande: the Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond* – re-assembles some of the visual and material culture from the Camp de la Lande, partial fragments of what has been kept from the 'Jungle' as it existed in Calais from March 2015 to the demolitions of October 2016. Lande was the controversial, euphemistic name used by French authorities for the site of this 'tolerated' encampment on the eastern margins of the city of Calais. The French word 'lande' means 'heath': it referred to the marginal physical geography of sandy outlands, a contaminated former landfill site. By Summer 2016, ten thousand displaced people lived at this place, better known as the 'Jungle de Calais'. The term 'Jungle' has been used for many different larger

and smaller encampments in Pas-de-Calais over the past two decades. Today some two thousand displaced people still live in 'micro-jungles' in the Calais landscape. Cycles of demolitions and encampments are intensifying. Part of the story begins with the relocation of UK border controls to Calais under the Sangatte Protocol at the Channel Tunnel terminal at Coquelles (opened 1994), and then at the Port of Calais under the Le Touquet Protocol (2003). While Europe's Schengen Area removed many official border crossings, Calais became for those seeking to claim asylum in Britain a place from which to make an irregular crossing. Another part of the story is the experimental and violent regime of borderwork created through the Franco-British 'policy of deterrence', which is ongoing today: a

kind of environmental hostility enacted through fences, razor wire, the routine use of tear gas, and worse.

The product of a three-year research project, the exhibit is co-curated by a collective that includes displaced people and volunteers who lived at the 'Jungle': Majid Adin, Shaista Aziz, Caroline Gregory, Dan Hicks, Sarah Mallet, Nour Munawar, Sue Partridge, Noah Salibo, and Wshear Wali. As an exercise in landscape archaeology our attention is on the physical environment of the camp, and the processes through which the camp was co-produced at the UK national border. The exhibit redefines Calais as a (post)colonial space, where displaced people from the former British informal empire in Sudan, Eritrea and Afghanistan gather in order to try to claim asylum.

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Walking Penguin by Razhan, 2016. Acrylic on board. Painted during art workshops at the 'Jungle'. Loaned by *Lande* co-curator Sue Partridge, photographed by Ian Cartwright. Razhan recalls: "The theatre tent was like my house. I used to go there every day to paint, sing or work out. In the *Jungle* I used to get cold all the time because there was no electricity and no warm place to stay in to sleep. I painted a yellow penguin on top of a hill with no water in sight". Sue writes: "How displaced can a living thing be? There were expectations of what artwork made in the *Jungle* must represent. Some Europeans wanted to capture pain and trauma no matter what the cost. After reliving their stories displaced people were chopped off at the roots all over again by this type of story harvesting. "He's painted a penguin?? Why a penguin? Where are the bombs? Where are the burst inflatable boats and the deaths at sea? This penguin has no place among the noise and filth of this place!" The Penguin didn't fit the expected narrative of the refugee experience. And so it reminds us there's only one thing that absolutely must be part of how every refugee's story is told, and that is freedom of expression."



Paper person, made by Daniel, aged 6, 2016. Poster paint on cut-out paper. Loaned by *Lande* co-curator Sue Partridge. Sue writes: "With the help of many refugees the first "Paper People" were hung across the *Calais Jungle* on 10 March 2016, just days after the clearances of the southern section of the site by the French authorities. The 291 cut-out paper shapes represented the 291 unaccompanied children whose shelters had been bulldozed in these demolitions. Of those 291 unaccompanied children, 129 went missing overnight. These paper figures documented this loss: how humanity is measured by the paperwork, and how the right documentation will keep you alive."

"The familiar euphemisms about 'contested', 'uncomfortable', 'entangled' or 'difficult' histories are no longer adequate"

This 'borderline archaeology' operates against the media performances of demolitions, to reveal a human landscape that has developed over more than twenty years. Photography is shown alongside objects and artworks. Everything on display is on temporary loan from displaced people, artists, activists and volunteers; nothing has been accessioned by the museum. Through these loans our hope is to create some small duration for ephemeral things. Each object bears witness to the ongoing human precarity at the UK national border at Calais. Our interest is in expanding archaeology's traditional focus on the undocumented past into the undocumented present – those human lives and experiences that go unreported or unspoken but are far from unimportant, and for which material and visual culture offers not just a source of evidence but a means of making visible, of creating a space for dialogue. Any loan brings obligations,

but each of these also reveals a debt to those who are classified as 'other' at places like borders or museums. Our hope in this exhibit is to make the space and time to foreground human relationships — from within the Pitt Rivers as institution that has been so often concerned with the timeless representation of others. Displaying artefacts and images from the most recent past, we hope to create a provisional time and place in which to think about our contemporary world. In this way, the *Lande* exhibit is about remembering the present.

The Pitt Rivers is an unlikely institution at which to develop this work of course. The familiar euphemisms about 'contested', 'uncomfortable', 'entangled' or 'difficult' histories are no longer adequate. It is clear that the Museum's dispossession and objectification of others are far from just a colonial 'legacy'. The work of decolonisation therefore requires an acknowledgement that

these are ongoing processes in the (post)colonial present. From this perspective, this exhibit is about re-purposing the anthropology museum for our contemporary world, and opening up the curatorial process. The anthropology museum shares its predicament with Anthropology as a discipline more generally. Both have a central place in 19th- and 20th-century racial ideologies of empire, and yet both also are uniquely placed to make visible human lives and experiences beyond the normal ethno-Euro-centric frame of museums and society.

Anthropology's past is refracted through dehumanising trends that have characterised some of the most flaneuristic academic, artistic and journalistic accounts of displaced people - the voyeuristic genres of 'dereliction tourism', 'ruin porn', 'dark heritage', and so on. Against such work, *Lande* makes a connection between the border and the museum as technologies of the nation state.

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Cardboard stencil by Majid Adin, March 2016. Loaned by *Lande* co-curator Sue Partridge, photographed by Ian Cartwright. Majid writes: "Each Mother's Day I gave my mother a gift. When I was far away I would post something to her. But in 2016 for the first time I could give her nothing. I was in the Calais Jungle with no money or documents, 10,000 kilometres away from her. What could I do? There were lots of journalists around. If I made a picture, might she see it on TV? I sprayed this image of my mother eight times in the Jungle camp. After the demolitions just one was left – under the bridge by the Banksy. Mother's Day came and went. No one paid attention to the stencil; I knew my idea hadn't worked. But after I got to the UK I found out someone had shared a photo of the stencil on Facebook. Many people liked it and now it was published in a book. I posted a copy of the book to my mother, explaining how I'd made this image for her. She was so happy to receive it. I never knew her to be happier about my work. So I love this artwork more than anything I made in my life. It doesn't matter how good it is or how many people see it. It has value and purity because it wasn't made for money or fame. The image doesn't try to change the world. It's just made from a simple love. Its creation was the reason I was born."



*The Calais Cross.* Anonymous, 2015. Painted wood. Salvaged from St Michael's Eritrean Orthodox Church at the 'Jungle' before it was demolished. Loaned by Right Reverend Andrew John, Bishop of Bangor.

Both museums and borders are spaces of containment, Victorian devices for the making of classifications between degrees of humanity. They were designed to forge differences between people. But both are also unfinished and open-ended (post) colonial enterprises. *Lande* attends to the new experimental regimes of state borderwork at Calais. It simultaneously experiments with the ethnographic museum, using the lens of 'Contemporary Archaeology' to make visible untold stories. Reassembling images, objects, environments and words from the near-past, it bears witness to the ongoing human experiences of displaced people at the UK national border at Calais. Insofar as the 'Jungle' was itself an act of resistance, protest, or making visible an ongoing situation, this exhibit aims to extend that work, using the duration of the curatorial process against the erasures of the state's demolitions.

Through four themes — Environmental Hostility, Temporal Violence, Visual Politics, and Giving Time — the exhibit aims, by displaying some of what survives from the

undocumented present, to create a space for new dialogues around the ongoing situation at Calais. Running through this is a firm commitment to the value of archaeological and anthropological museums, repurposed to generate more human accounts of our contemporary world, through material and visual culture.

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*Lande: the Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond* is at the Pitt Rivers Museum until 29 November 2019. Open daily 10.00am - 4.30pm (Mondays from 12). Entrance is free, but contactless donations to Help Refugees are encouraged.

**"Both museums and borders are spaces of containment, Victorian devices for the making of classifications between degrees of humanity"**

The book *Lande: the Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond* by Dan Hicks and Sarah Mallet can be downloaded for free, or purchased in hard copy, from the Bristol University Press website. It is also exclusively available in paperback for £15 at the Pitt Rivers shop. All royalties to L'Auberge des Migrants.

