

These are not toys: A Sculptural and Photographic
Exploration of Popular Palaeontology Representation in
Museums and Toys pre-*Jurassic Park*

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led research explores the portrayal of prehistoric animals in toys, palaeoart, and museum displays pre the 1993 film *Jurassic Park*. Of interest is the ever-changing nature of pop-palaeontological culture and how this constant change is reflected in representations and reconstructions of prehistoric life. My research positions 1993 as a division between a pre-digital and digital age of pop-palaeontological culture and museum display methods, and identifies their common pre-digital physical properties. The project seeks to convey that within this context, outdated representations of pop-palaeontological culture and methods of museum display, do not necessarily infer irrelevant knowledge. By constructing a fictitious museum—called *The Pop-Palaeo Museum*—that uses multimedia sculptural and photographic methods, I express what is lost through a disregard for pre-digital museum displays and highlight the dinosaur as an ever-changing form. Specifically, my methods draw on analogue techniques, which are reworked through contemporary processes aligned with pre-1993 representations of prehistoric life.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed

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INTRODUCTION: HOW *JURASSIC PARK* RUINED MY LIFE

The film *Jurassic Park* was released in 1993, eight years before I was born. It incorporates the use of both practical special effects and computer-generated imagery (CGI). The film solidified CGI imagery as ground-breaking in depicting something as ‘realistic’.¹ It signalled a significant technological and pop-cultural shift in how people could experience dinosaurs. The film inadvertently pressured all other popular palaeontological media, be it toys, museums, books, or documentaries, to live up to the benchmark it set.²

This practice-led research employs methods involving sculpture, installation, and photography to explore the visual characteristics of pre-digital museum displays and pop-palaeontological culture. Within the context of this project, 1993 functions as a broad timestamp separating a pre-digital and digital age of museum display and pop-palaeontological culture. My research focuses on museum display methods and popular palaeontological culture before this point. It is situated within three key areas of interest—the represented dinosaur, the museum authentic dinosaur, and authenticity in museums. These key areas of interest are discussed across three chapters, each answering a particular element of my central research question; how can outdated representations of prehistoric life remediate a pre-digital museum experience? Within the context of pop-palaeontological culture and museum display methods, I adopt the argument that being outdated does not infer irrelevance.

The methodological framework of this research links to museum display practices, including curation and installation. Through acquiring pre-digital pop-palaeontological media such as toy dinosaurs, I curate an archive of pop-cultural representations of dinosaurs pre-*Jurassic Park*. I use sculpting as a tool for the replication and recreation of museum authentic objects, specifically when an object is unobtainable. My sculpting is aided by digital documentation of the unobtainable objects. This process culminates in an installation practice encompassing objects, photographs, and film that explore pre-digital museum display methods and the dinosaur as a form.

1. Pierson, Michele. “CGI Effects in Hollywood Science-Fiction Cinema 1989–95: The Wonder Years.” *Screen* 40, no. 2 (July 1, 1999): 158–76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/40.2.158>.

2. Howgate, Michael E. “Modelling Prehistory: From the Crystal Palace Park to ‘Jurassic Park’ - Howgate - 2019 - *Geology Today* - Wiley Online Library.” *Geology Today* 35 (August 2019). <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/doi/full/10.1111/gto.12281>.

The first chapter—‘Living in an Age of Dinosaurs’—discusses reconstructions of prehistoric animals and what purpose they serve when they no longer represent up-to-date scientific knowledge. The chapter explores the value of outdated representations of prehistoric animals in palaeoart within a digital era. My project examines the dinosaur as an ever-changing form, which is established in this chapter using the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs* (1854) to explain how reconstructions are physical records of ways of thinking about dinosaurs. The chapter expands on palaeoartist Mark Witton’s definition of palaeoart³ to be more inclusive of historically informed reconstructions of prehistoric animals. I argue that recontextualising outdated pop-palaeontological representations can express the dinosaur as an ever-changing form. In my work, this idea is explored through my curation of objects that exhibit these changing forms, and their relevance to the understanding and thinking of the time they were made. This chapter also explores how the popularity of certain dinosaur media established ambiguity regarding the usage of the word dinosaur, as well as the possible associative causes of the persistence of outdated ideas around dinosaurs.

Chapter Two—‘Authenticity- “These are not toys”’—discusses the dinosaur craze in the U.S.A. during the 1950s and the lasting effects that the first mass-produced dinosaur toys had on pop-palaeontological culture. This chapter explores how pop-palaeontological media representations and reconstructions, such as scale figures and models, impact popular understanding of dinosaurs. Here I consider scientific accuracy and representation in toys of prehistoric animals, and how it may contribute to the timeline of understanding the dinosaur in an ever-changing state of flux. Also covered are the implications that mass-produced plastic toys entail in the context of the palaeoart meme.⁴ This chapter establishes the concept of the museum authenticated toy. Though the museum authentic is explored in further detail in Chapter Three, I argue that the Invicta Plastics Ltd. dinosaurs hold a crucial position in the context of this research project as they embody the characteristics of a mass-produced toy, while also functioning as museum authentic objects.

3. Witton, Mark P. *The Palaeoartist’s Handbook: Recreating Prehistoric Animals in Art*. Marlborough (UK): The Crowood Press, 2018.

4. Naish, Darren. “Palaeoart Memes and the Unspoken Status Quo in Palaeontological Popularization - Scientific American Blog Network.” *Tetrapod Zoology* (blog), February 10, 2017. <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/tetrapod-zoology/palaeoart-memes-and-the-unspoken-status-quo-in-palaeontological-popularization/>.

Chapter Three—'Experiencing Museums'—expands on the concept of museum authenticity. I incorporate concepts established in Chapters One and Two and explore if outdated museum displays still serve a purpose when recontextualised as an integral part of a museum experience, as placed within an ever-changing understanding of prehistory, which ties back to the premise that outdated does not infer irrelevancy. Drawing on historian Stephen Greenblatt's concepts around "resonance and wonder" in museum displays, I establish definitions for museum authentic objects. I separate museum authenticity into two groups; the authenticity of the objects on display as to what they represent, and the authenticity to that of a museum aesthetic made up of physical traits commonly repeated through museums.

The second half of this chapter focuses on my artwork, *The Pop-Palaeo Museum*, a fictitious museum that acts as a space of exploration for pre-digital methods of museum display and ways to present the dinosaur as a form. This artwork resists critiquing museum practices of collecting and control, and instead focuses on establishing a pre-digital museum experience of dinosaurs. In my making practice and curation, I demonstrate how outdated representations of prehistoric life, as a record of human understanding, can remediate a pre-digital museum experience. The artworks of this research recreate an entirely pre-digital museum collection that includes the replication of display methods to capture the essence of what is lost to the sensory experience when the showcasing of evolving knowledge is removed.

CHAPTER ONE: LIVING IN AN AGE OF DINOSAURS

1.1 THE PRESENCE OF DINOSAURS

In 2003, a three-part BBC docuseries titled *Sea Monsters* aired. I was two years old at the time and was in the lounge with my parents as they watched it. Though I have no memory of watching it then, it profoundly impacted me growing up. It sparked an obsession with prehistoric animals, fuelled by my family, who would go out of their way to get me very specific toys of my favourite prehistoric creatures and take me on regular trips to Auckland War Memorial Museum (see Figure 1). I had several dinosaur books that belonged to my uncle from his childhood. They were very different from the more modern type of dinosaur books I was exposed to, making the palaeoart (art depicting life reconstructions of prehistoric animals) in these older books far more engaging. This chapter, while exploring what made these older depictions engaging, discusses the value of outdated representations of prehistoric animals in a digital age.

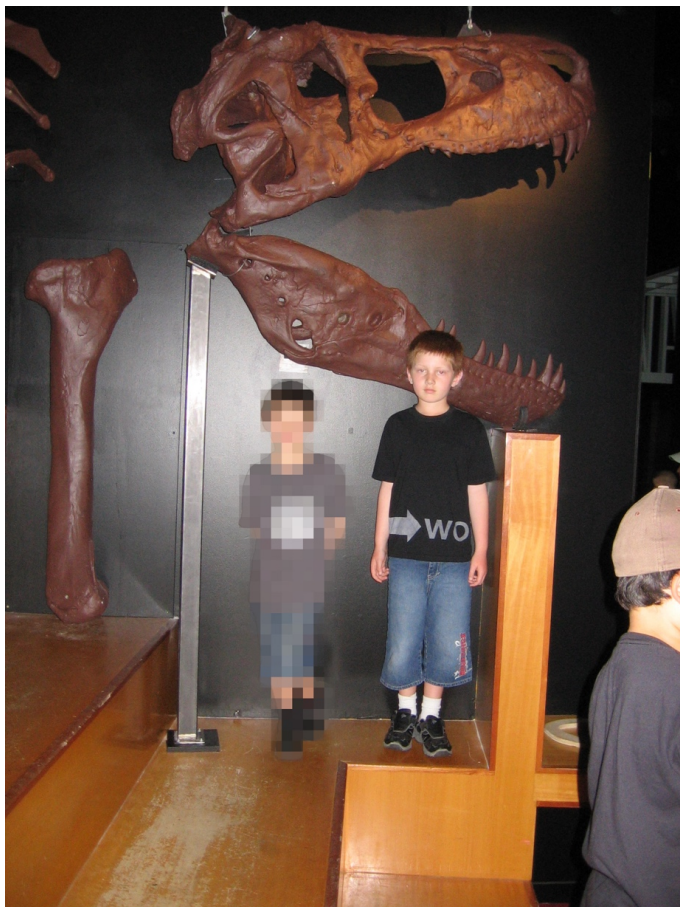


Figure 1. Me, age seven, at Auckland War Memorial Museum to see A T-Rex Named Sue in late 2008.

These books, such as *The Evolution and Ecology of the Dinosaurs* (1975),⁵ illustrated by Giovanni Caselli (see figure 2), did not feature the CGI imagery that had become popular in dinosaur books in the early 2000s, but instead depicted heavily stylised, saturated otherworldly creatures inhabiting landscapes lost to time. Caselli's work established within me the concept that the appearance of dinosaurs can change over time. This concept is critical in demonstrating the value of outdated representations of prehistoric animals. It contributes to the notion that the dinosaur is an ever-changing form and that knowledge of dinosaurs is not static.

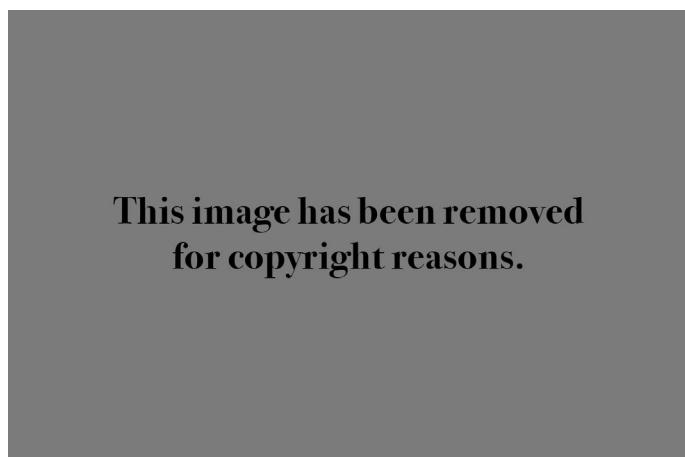


Figure 2. Halstead, L.B. *The Evolution and Ecology of the Dinosaurs*. Italy: Eurobook Limited, 1975.

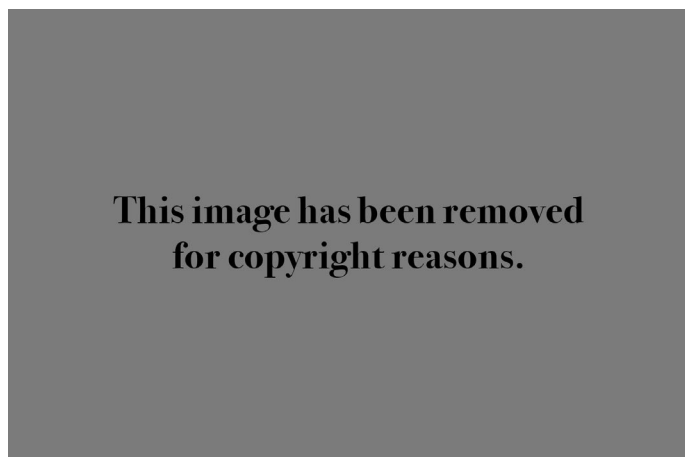


Figure 3. Owen, Ellis. *Prehistoric Animals, The Extraordinary Story of Life Before Man*. London: Octopus Books Ltd, 1975.

The book that changed everything for me was *Prehistoric Animals, The Extraordinary Story of Life Before Man* (1975)⁶ This book is a collection of photographs of museum-

5. Halstead, L.B. *The Evolution and Ecology of the Dinosaurs*. Italy: Eurobook Limited, 1975.

6. Owen, Ellis. *Prehistoric Animals, The Extraordinary Story of Life Before Man*. London: Octopus Books Ltd, 1975.

based models by Arthur Hayward and Vernon Edwards. The models are situated in dioramas and presented as living animals. Again, despite these reconstructions being outdated, they further evoked wonderment for me. This time it was more to do with the craft behind the images and featured models, which sparked a fascination with museum models and dioramas. However, I became increasingly frustrated as to why the photos of my toys on my Canon point-and-shoot looked nothing like the images in the book. Both books are products of a pre-digital age. Despite presenting outdated information, these books proved vital in my understanding of prehistory and in developing an appreciation of pre-digital museum display methods. My childhood experiences with pre-digital pop-palaeontological media in a digital age proved to me the importance that older depictions of dinosaurs serve an informative purpose despite being factually inaccurate. This research project explores how older depictions of prehistoric life can serve to inform and validate past thinking by contextualising that knowledge within a certain place in time.

Since their discovery in the early 19th Century, dinosaurs have been ever-present in popular culture. They have taken many forms, not only in a biological sense but also in terms of their representation. For a group of animals that have not walked the earth in over 65 million years, they have an incredible physical presence. Though the skeletal reconstruction is vital to imagining the dinosaur form, it is their fleshed-out reconstructions that can most widely communicate information about these animals. What reconstructions also offer, which skeletons cannot, is a record of human interpretation and understanding of dinosaurs. Although skeletons can be rearranged and reposed as information about these animals changes, their reconstructions fix knowledge to a specific time.⁷ The preservation of historic reconstructions of prehistoric life can be a valuable tool to convey the instability of the dinosaur image. An example is the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs*.

7. For an exploration into the use of skeletal mount armatures, see artist Dane Mitchell's installation *Unknown Affinities* (2022). Though not necessarily the intention of the installation, the skeletal mount armature can function in the same way as a fixed reconstruction does in terms of representing the knowledge of a certain point in time. Though a skeleton can be reposed on a new armature, the old armature remains as evidence of the past skeletal pose.

In 1854, the *Geological Court* at Crystal Palace was unveiled. It was a garden that originally featured 37 sculptures of prehistoric animals.⁸ The sculptures were built by Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins under the guidance of Sir Richard Owen and featured the first physical reconstructions of dinosaurs. Despite their popularity with the London public, by the 1880s, they were being met with much scrutiny, reflecting changes in knowledge of the representation of prehistoric animals.⁹ The *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs* were the first victims of the priority of scientific value over artistic value within palaeoart. In the last decade, this issue has been rectified as the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs* are now presented with consideration for the contexts in which they were made.¹⁰ Rather than symbolising how wrong Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins was, compared to modern understanding, they reflect how much knowledge of prehistoric animals changes over time.

Reconstructions like the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs* come under the artistic category of palaeoart. Because of the scientific subject matter of the artwork, the artistic elements of palaeoart could be ignored by the viewer. When viewing any other art, it is seen as such—art, yet palaeoart has suffered from narrow definitions that limit its status as art. For example, in Mark Witton’s *The Palaeoartists Handbook: Recreating prehistoric animals in art* (2018), he makes a clear definition of what constitutes palaeoart:

Not all artwork involving fossils can be considered palaeoartworks. We might broadly diagnose palaeoart as requiring three essential elements: 1) being beholden to scientific data; 2) involving a restorative component to fill in missing yet essential biological data; and, of course, 3) relating to extinct subject matter such as ancient landscapes, animals and plants.¹¹

Witton’s definition narrows the field of palaeoart significantly. He states that skeletal mounts, despite technically meeting all three criteria, would not be classed as ‘true palaeoart’ by some, as skeletal mounts do not “attempt to show living animals as we would see them in life”.¹² In this project, I do not adopt this view as it excludes an immense volume of work that accurately

8. Witton, Mark P. “The Art and Science of the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs – Book Launch by Mark Witton & Ellinor Michel – YouTube.” Book Launch, June 14, 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbaWb7cDaQE&list=WL&index=5>.

9. Witton, Mark P., and Ellinor Michael. *The Art and Science of the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs*. Wiltshire: The Crowood Press Ltd, 2022.

10. *Friends of Crystal Palace Dinosaurs*. “What Are the ‘Crystal Palace Dinosaurs’?,” 2023. <https://cpdinosaurs.org/>.

11. Witton, Mark P. *The Palaeoartist’s Handbook: Recreating Prehistoric Animals in Art*. Marlborough (UK): The Crowood Press, 2018.

12. *ibid.*

depicts dinosaurs throughout the different phases of prehistoric animal knowledge. My definition of what constitutes palaeoart broadens the field to include reconstructions based on *other* reconstructions that met the criteria at the time of their creation. This definition not only opens the term palaeoart to include paintings or drawings that represent dated understandings of prehistoric animals but also models and toys. For example, a replica scale model of a *Crystal Palace Iguanodon* (see Figures 4 and 5) counts as palaeoart. Although the original work it is based on does not represent the modern understanding of the Iguanodon, it does accurately represent the thinking of 1854. Therefore, a replica functions as a material facsimile of that thinking.



Figure 4. Goodfellow, Robin. Photographer. *1850's Crystal Palace Iguanodon (Oldies Model)* by Kazunari Araki. Digital Photograph. September 2016. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/130140542@N03/29225245894/in/album-72157695705040245/>



Figure 5. Delamotte, Philip Henry. *Photographic Views of the Progress of the Crystal Palace, Sydenham. Taken during the Progress of the Works, by Desire of the Directors, by Philip H. Delamotte. Together with a List of the Directors and Officers of the Company, Etc.* 1855. Photograph. Tab.442.a.5, plate 66. © British Library Board. <https://imagesonline.bl.uk/asset/171781>.

1.2 IT IS ACTUALLY NOT A DINOSAUR

A good portion of this research is centred on the never-ending identity crisis faced by dinosaurs.



Figure 6. Pfeiffer, Jeffrey S. *The Marx Dinosaur Line*. 2016. Photograph. Pfeiffer, Jeffrey S. *Dinosaur Playsets*. Revised Expanded Edition. AuthorHouse, 2020.

This identity crisis likely comes down to public appeal, as out of all the extinct prehistoric groups of animals, dinosaurs are undoubtedly the most heavily represented in pop-culture. Despite their massive representation, it was rare for dinosaur toy sets to be exclusively made up of dinosaurs. During the 1950s and 60s, U.S. toy manufacturer Marx had nine non-dinosaurian figures in their line-up of twenty-two prehistoric animals (see Figure 6), and MPC (Multiple Products Corporation) had twelve non-dinosaurian figures in their line-up of twenty-four prehistoric animals.¹³ UK plastics manufacturer Invicta Plastics Ltd, commissioned by the London Natural History Museum, released two sets in 1974 and 1975 titled *The Age of Dinosaurs* (see Figure 7). Yet three out of the eight figures were not dinosaurs.¹⁴ In common use, the word ‘dinosaur’ covers a much greater ground than its strict definition. It is much

13. Pfeiffer, Jeffrey S. *Dinosaur Playsets*. Revised Expanded Edition. AuthorHouse, 2020.

14. Telleria, Robert. “Invicta.” In *Dinosauriana- The Essential Guide to Collecting Figural, Toy and Model Dinosaurs*, V. Joe DeMarco, 2016.

more common for it to be used to describe things that merely represent dinosaurs than dinosaurs themselves, and evidently, in some cases, representations of non-dinosaurs too.

The inconsistent use of the word dinosaur is something to address, not necessarily to change, but to put into context. Though ‘prehistoric animals’ would be the correct term to apply, the term ‘dinosaur’ functions as a reflection of their popularity and therefore is frequently used in place of ‘prehistoric animals’.¹⁵ Throughout this research project, I frequently use dinosaur as a broad term encompassing all prehistoric animals. Despite this use being factually incorrect, it reflects much of the pop-palaeontological media I have encountered, such as the Invicta dinosaurs.

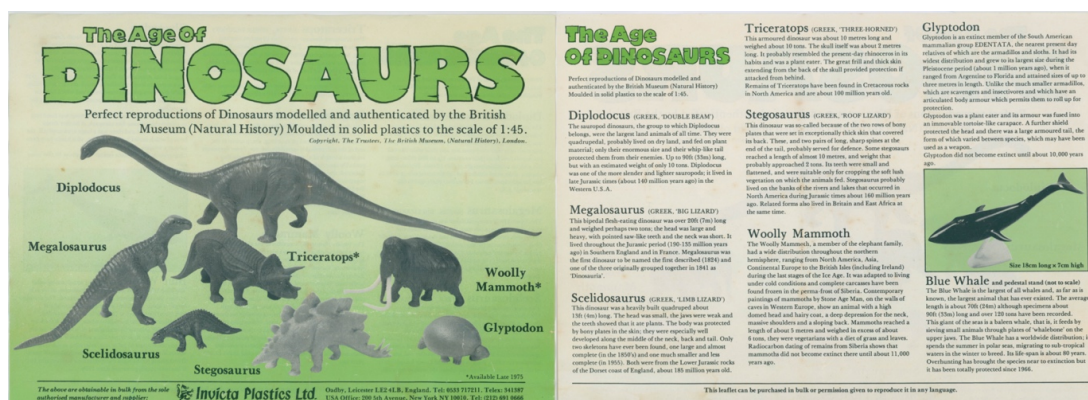


Figure 7. Invicta Plastics Ltd. *The Age of Dinosaurs*. 1974. Paper leaflet. Author’s personal collection.

Alongside the relatively ambiguous use of the word dinosaur in pop-palaeontological culture is the variation of appearance within representations of the same species. There is a reliance upon artists to reconstruct prehistoric animals accurately. Occasionally, certain work within palaeoart becomes so iconic that the style is reproduced by other artists long after the information originally used is outdated.¹⁶ In 2006, a study was conducted to determine what college students and primary schoolers thought *Tyrannosaurus-Rex* might have looked like. The majority drew a creature posed upright, dragging its tail; a pose popularised in the early twentieth century but one that has been considered outdated since the 1970s.¹⁷ Despite these students having had plenty of modern representations of T-Rex during their lifetimes, the

15. DeMarco, Joe, and Mike Fredericks. *Dinosauriana- The Essential Guide to Collecting Figural, Toy and Model Dinosaurs*. V. Joe DeMarco, 2016.

16. Witton, Mark P., Darren Naish, and John Conway. “State of the Palaeoart.” *Palaeontologia Electronica* 17, no. 3 (September 26, 2014): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.26879/145>.

17. Ju, Anne. “Blame Barney: Students’ Perception of T. Rex Is Outdated.” *Cornell Chronicle*, February 6, 2016. <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2013/02/blame-barney-students-perception-t-rex-outdated>.

persistence of old ideas about dinosaurs still prevails in the form of vintage books, toys and films. As well as the pop-cultural influences affecting the students' depictions of the T-Rex, associations between outdated reconstructions of dinosaurs and older museums contribute to their misunderstanding. Relating older reconstructions to established educational institutions without necessary context implies a sense of truth and authenticity in these reconstructions. In addition, an association of the modern agile dinosaur depictions within popular fictitious media, such as *Jurassic Park*, entail a sense of disingenuity compared to reconstructions associated with older museums.

Part of the pop-cultural success of dinosaurs is linked to the mystery surrounding them.¹⁸ This mystery comes from the instability of the dinosaur image, which has allowed many variations of the same animal to exist simultaneously. For example, up until the late 1980s, the Iguanodon was almost always depicted making a thumbs-up gesture to highlight its thumb spike (see Figure 8), though often, the bodies those thumbs were attached to would differ greatly from each other. This representational difference highlights the possibilities of exploring dinosaurs as forms rather than animals. Changes to the representations of dinosaurs over time show that knowledge of dinosaurs is in a constant state of flux; no singular depiction of a species should be accepted as absolute truth. One possible way to communicate this state of flux is by showing various reconstructions of the same animal and highlighting the variation between those reconstructions.

In my artworks, I highlight the instability of dinosaur reconstructions by using vintage toys and models. These include examples released from the 1940s up until 1993 (pre-digital dinosaurs). Presenting this range of material within the context of pre-digital museum design tropes demonstrates how they are dated. Through this process, my project aims to establish a sense of how much has changed in the understanding of prehistory, and the position of pre-digital dinosaur representations in a digital age. Artist Mark Dion's *Toys 'R' U.S. When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1994) (see Figure 9) explores the presence of dinosaurs in the commodification of scientific knowledge. It features several examples of the same pre-digital dinosaur material I use in my work. However, the outdated nature of this dinosaur media is not the focus of Dion's work.

18. *The Allure of Vintage Dinosaur Artwork*, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKXokoLHXQI>.

In considering the value of outdated representations of prehistoric animals in palaeoart within a digital era, I position palaeoart as more inclusive of historically informed reconstructions. The dinosaur is viewed as an everchanging form, where each reconstruction is a snapshot of thinking at a particular point in time. Though these reconstructions may be considered outdated, their importance to historical knowledge enables them to remain relevant.

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for copyright reasons.**

Figure 8. Burian, Zdenek. *Iguanodon*. 1962. Painting.

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Figure 9. Dion, Mark. *Toys 'R' U.S. When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*. 1994. Installation.

CHAPTER TWO: AUTHENTICITY, “THESE ARE NOT TOYS.”

2.1 THE OTHER MARX

This chapter focuses on the impact pop-palaeontological media representations and reconstructions, such as scale figures and models, have on popular understandings of dinosaurs. The source material used by companies to produce dinosaur toys in the mid-twentieth century was present in the formal qualities of those toys. The translation of the source material into toy form would have influenced consumer understanding about dinosaurs as the popularity of the toys increased. The dinosaur toy is a relatively commonplace object. Most toy shops have an entire section dedicated to dinosaurs, some even specifically to *Jurassic Park*. The commonality of dinosaurs is something I have often taken for granted, though they were not always as omnipresent as they are today. Despite the discovery of dinosaurs in the seventeenth century and subsequent pop-cultural success, dinosaurs were never established as commonplace in people’s homes until the 1940s and 50s. In *Terrible Lizard! The Dinosaur as a Plaything* (2004), author Ron Tanner states that it was most likely due to societal shifts regarding the public’s view on the sciences and religion that gave way to the increased popularity of dinosaurs.¹⁹

Marx, a USA toy company, capitalised on this newfound popularity by introducing the first mass-produced set of toy dinosaurs in 1957. These toys were small, cheap, and easily recognisable, and unlike the dinosaur figurines that preceded them, they were widely available.²⁰ The Marx dinosaurs were a massive success, and they proved that toy dinosaurs were a profitable product, which caused a considerable shift in the available diversity of dinosaur products. Journalist and musician Leslie Lieber describes the then-new dinosaur craze in a 1958 issue of *This Week Magazine*:

Little did the last surviving 40-ton Brontosaurus think when he got stuck in the mud and died some 75 million years ago that he would return to earth in 1958 as one of the hottest items in Macy’s toy department. Even Tyrannosaurus rex would have breathed

19. Tanner, Ron. “Terrible Lizard! The Dinosaur as Plaything.” *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 2 (March 22, 2004): 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-734X.2000.2302_53.x.
20. Pfeiffer, Jeffrey S. *Dinosaur Playsets. Revised Expanded Edition*. AuthorHouse, 2020.

easier at the end had he known that eons later American children would refuse to go to sleep without their pet dinosaurs.²¹

Lieber goes on to describe the immense popularity of dinosaurs amongst the American public at the time and briefly discusses some of the manufacturers and their success. The way dinosaurs are discussed in this article expresses their impact and embedment into American pop-culture. Products that had previously only appeared in museum gift shops were now in most toy shops and department stores, progressively growing into a global phenomenon. Dinosaurs had become, and remain, something more than their biological selves. Dinosaurs, due to 65 million years' worth of extinction, will be forever viewed through the abstraction of fossilisation and reconstruction; their true form can only be speculated and imagined. This reconstruction is usually done by experts, but when toy companies produce dinosaurs, scientific accuracy is not necessarily a factor in their product design. It appears that the most common practice is to base designs on pre-existing artistic reconstructions, often with little regard to how up-to-date the reconstruction is (see Figure 10). Because Marx proved the popularity of dinosaur toys, encouraging other companies to also mass-produce them, it created a new platform of influence in terms of the dinosaur image. The permanence of plastic means that severely outdated depictions of dinosaurs exist long after their initial production. By treating these outdated dinosaur toys as historical artefacts, my project aims to recontextualise them into an archive of depiction, demonstrating the dinosaur as a form in a constant state of flux.

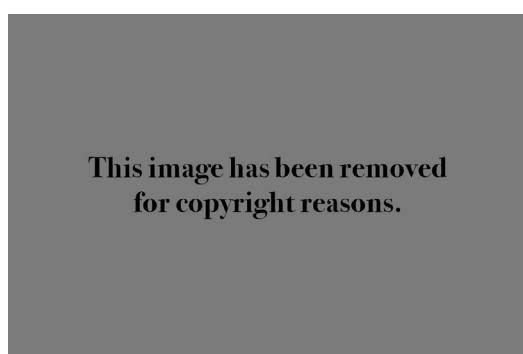


Figure 10. The revised version of the Marx T-Rex compared to the circa. 1919 T-Rex painting by Charles R. Knight. This figure was released in 1958, ignoring nearly 40 years of scientific development. Coudert, Baptiste. *Marx 1958 Grey Tyrannosaurus Rex T-Rex*. May 1, 2014. Photo. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/baptistecoudert/13909193390/>.

21. Lieber, Leslie. "Big Boom in Dinosaurs." *This Week Magazine*, July 27, 1958.

During the dinosaur boom of the 1950s, an issue of depiction solidified itself in a way that pop-culture has never recovered from—the “palaeoart meme”.²² Palaeontologist Darren Naish describes the palaeoart meme as “repeated themes of detail, composition and design”²³ in depicting prehistoric animals. Though this description is most prominent in illustrations in literature, it affects all aspects of popular palaeontology. However, the palaeoart meme went a step further in the context of toys. Unlike museums, toy companies have no obligation to ensure that they accurately represent subjects or educate the public. For example, when a museum knows that the information it is presenting has become outdated, it will likely change it if possible. Conversely, toy companies may produce the same figures for decades after the information they used to design them has become outdated.

For the Marx prehistoric animals, sculptor Phil Derham²⁴ evidently used Rudolph Zallinger’s *The Age of Reptiles* (1947) and various Charles R. Knight paintings as references for his sculpts.²⁵ Because of Derham’s evident use of those references, their depictions were already somewhat dated by the time the Marx dinosaurs were released. Marx’s moulds are still circulating today, and recasts of these figures still emerge semi-regularly,²⁶ which furthers the need for the recontextualisation of these toys. My project’s methods acknowledge that toy companies often try to capture three-dimensionally the interpretations of well-renowned palaeoartist’s works. For example, I present various toys which consecutively represent the same species, drawing attention to a clear common source material, most often artworks by Zdeněk Burian, Rudolph Zallinger and Charles R. Knight. These toys reflect outdated reconstructions of dinosaurs, specifically replicating what were once accurate reconstructions.

2.2 PERFECT REPRODUCTIONS

As a child, creating my own museum did not seem like an unattainable fantasy. What seem like simple things now—the way dinosaur toys would be grouped together or displayed in dioramas

22. Naish, Darren. “Palaeoart Memes and the Unspoken Status Quo in Palaeontological Popularization - Scientific American Blog Network.” *Tetrapod Zoology* (blog), February 10, 2017.
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/tetrapod-zoology/palaeoart-memes-and-the-unspoken-status-quo-in-palaeontological-popularization/>.

23. *ibid.*

24. Kern, Rusty. “The Marx Prehistoric Sets: The Untold Story (Part 1).” *Prehistoric Times Magazine*, May 2002.

25. ravenloft. “Dinosaur Playsets.” *Universal Monster Army*, November 14, 2020.

<https://www.universalmmonsterarmy.com/forum/index.php?topic=23582.480>.

26 Pfeiffer, Jeffrey S. *Dinosaur Playsets. Revised Expanded Edition*. AuthorHouse, 2020.

and the way fossils were kept in small drawers and were labelled—were a big deal when I was little. I am interested in how a practice of collecting and categorisation, despite its often-problematic historical implications, is instilled at a young age. Authors Kevin M. Moist and David Banash describe the practice of collecting as follows:

... not just a matter of history, institutions, and eccentrics; nearly every child makes collections of anything from stones picked up in a yard to expensive toys bought by parents. So collecting is deeply enmeshed in the basic processes of cultural meaning and found in the roots of almost every personal history.²⁷

A childhood fascination with museums combined with a desire to collect is something that producers of dinosaur media have capitalised on since the 1950s. For example, the New Zealand branch of the Nabisco cereal company ran advertisements compelling viewers to “Make your own museum of prehistoric animals”²⁸ (see Figure 11). This dinosaur museum theme continues to be repeated in other companies such as *PNSO* (Pecking Natural Science-art Organization), Bullyland, and Kaiyodo.

27. Moist, Kevin M., and David Banash, eds. *Contemporary Collecting: Objects, Practices, and the Fate of Things*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: Scarecrow Press, Incorporated, 2013.

28. Summers, Stephen, and Peter Fisher. *50 Years of New Zealand Cereal Toys, 1950 - 2000*. New Zealand: Summers & Fisher, 2006.

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Figure 11. Summers, Stephen, and Peter Fisher. *50 Years of New Zealand Cereal Toys, 1950 - 2000*. New Zealand: Summers & Fisher, 2006.

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Figure 12. Ward, Henry A. *Catalogue of Casts of Fossils, from the Principal Museums of Europe and America, with Short Descriptions and Illustrations*. Rochester, N. Y: Benton & Andrews, Printers, 1866.

With such a strong relationship between museum institutions and popular palaeontological media, something had to change in the educational quality of toy dinosaurs. Popular toys failed

to follow any up-to-date scientific information in the design of the sculptures and were based on outdated knowledge. In contrast, the first scale dinosaur models distributed were miniature versions of the sculptures at Crystal Palace (see Figure 12).²⁹ They were distributed to museums and universities in limited quantity and introduced the concept of the scale model dinosaur in education. By the 1920s, larger museums such as the London Natural History Museum and the National Museum of Natural History (United States), as well as many smaller institutions worldwide, had in-house sculptors creating scale model reconstructions of extinct life. Sculptors such as Vernon Edwards, Charles Whitney Gilmore and Friedrich König produced scale models to be shown alongside fossils to show viewers what the animals might have looked like. This practice has progressively disappeared from museums as commercially available models have become more accurate and affordable, solidifying its status uniquely as a pre-digital museum display method.

Museums that did not have the staff to produce models could order models through other institutions (see Figure 13), resulting in some models from the same maker being distributed widely throughout the world. By trawling through image databases such as Flickr and Instagram, I have found that many of these models are still on display in various museums today despite their age (see Figure 14). I could not find evidence of whether they were contextualised as historical reconstructions or were still functioning as primary reconstructions. This contextualisation is essential as it allows viewers to understand the age of the knowledge the reconstruction is based on. Where these museum models differ from toys is in their service to the museum as museum authentic objects.

29. Witton, Mark P., and Ellinor Michael. *The Art and Science of the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs*. Wiltshire: The Crowood Press Ltd, 2022.

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for copyright reasons.

Figure 13. Gregory, Bottley & Co. *A Catalogue of Plaster Cast Models of Extinct Animals* – Gregory, Botley & Co. Surrey: The Baysford Press Ltd., 1961.

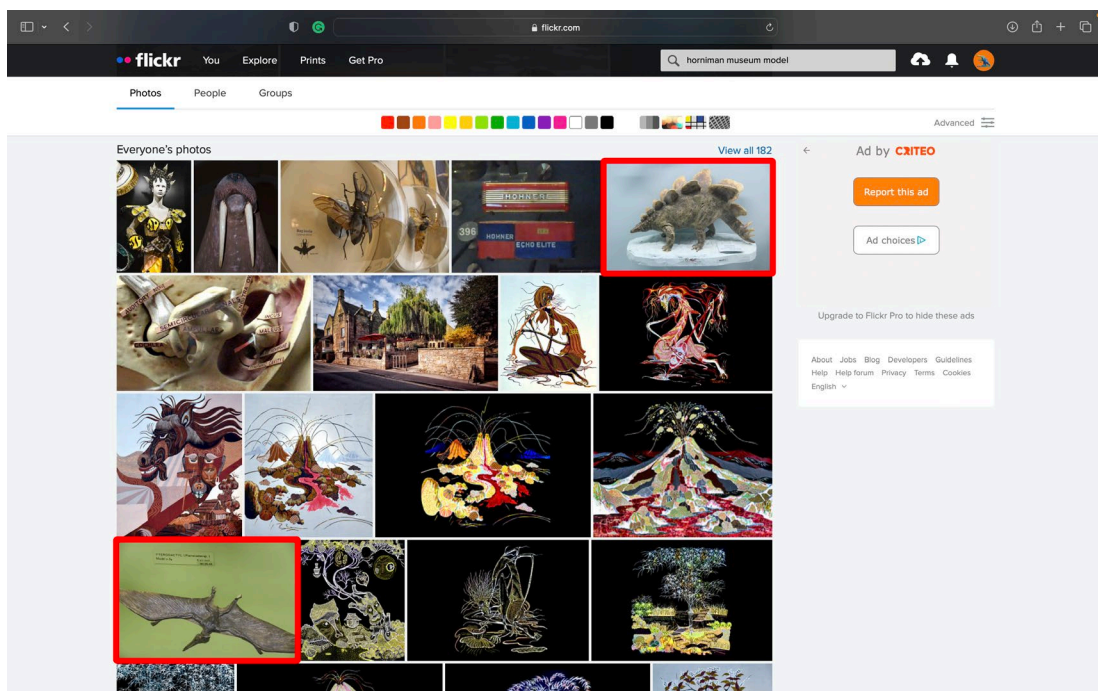


Figure 14. Flickr. "Search Results for 'Horniman Museum Model,'" https://www.flickr.com/search/?view_all=1&text=horniman%20museum%20model.

Until the 1970s, detailed models of prehistoric animals were predominantly only available to museums and educational facilities. Availability changed when, in 1973, the London Natural History Museum partnered with Invicta Plastics Ltd, employing their resident sculptor Arthur

Hayward to produce reconstructions. The first consisted of a Megalosaurus, Diplodocus, and Scelidosaurus. These toys stood out from everything else available up to that point; they were in the same scale as each other, were exceptionally detailed, and were substantially larger than most dinosaur toys. The tagline for this set was their true selling point, “Perfect reproductions of Dinosaurs modelled and authenticated by the British Museum (Natural History). Moulded in Solid Plastic”.³⁰ Behold, the ‘museum authentic’ toy. Consumers were now faced with a product asserting its museum authenticity. Despite museums having sold dinosaur figures in their shops for years, it was the first time the term ‘museum authentic’ had been placed on a product. Over the course of 20 years, in a line-up of 23 sculpts, the idea of owning a museum authentic was sold to the public, and a new benchmark was set for companies producing figures of prehistoric animals.

The museum authentic toy presents itself as a critical concept within my research, as it sits both within the categories of the represented dinosaur, specifically as a toy, and the museum authentic. The museum authentic toy embodies the characteristics of the mass-produced toy yet retains the care and formal qualities expected from a model in a museum display. As I explore in the artworks of this research, it would place just as comfortably in the context of a child’s bedroom floor as it would behind glass in a museum. The Invicta dinosaurs are the central figures within my artwork as they are the original museum authentic toys.

Pre-digital toy dinosaurs, which gained popularity in the mid-20th century, are commonplace in many homes and continue to influence and impact public understanding of dinosaur knowledge long into a post-digital era. The introduction of museum authentic toys goes some way to rectify the accuracy issues of earlier dinosaur toys, but inevitably too, faced becoming outdated as knowledge evolved. Provided they are contextualised appropriately, they can still present as relevant.

30. Invicta Plastics Ltd. *The Age of Dinosaurs Set 1*. 1974. Toy Set. Author’s personal collection.

CHAPTER THREE: EXPERIENCING MUSEUMS

3.1 AUTHENTICITY IN MUSEUMS - A MATTER OF CONTEXT

A large part of what makes in-person visits to museums attractive is experiencing things unavailable anywhere else and being present with an authentic object. For example, a current exhibition at Auckland War Memorial Museum³¹ includes the only display of an adult male and female Tyrannosaurus-Rex in the world. This experience could not be replicated without being present at the Museum and is part of a broader authentic museum experience. Specifically within the context of a pre-digital museum, the McGregor Museum at Auckland University is a time capsule of pre-digital museum display methods and provides a unique, authentic view into pre-digital museums. This chapter expands on the concept of museum authenticity and examines how outdated museum displays may still serve a purpose when recontextualised as an integral part of the museum experience.

In the context of museums, I break authenticity into two categories; the authenticity of the objects on display as to what they represent and the authenticity to that of the museum as an aesthetic. This aesthetic is shaped by methods of museum display that inform a general characterisation of how museums look. There are common threads in the methods of how museum objects are displayed, and it is these threads, not necessarily the objects themselves, that create a museum aesthetic. Natural history museums, for example, tend to include full-sized or scale models, dioramas, skeletal mounts, wet and mounted animal and plant specimens, and occasionally live displays such as aviaries or aquariums. I am interested in how instances of pre-digital non-living museum displays are experienced and what they may contribute to a museum experience in a digital era.

Ultimately the goal of museums is to educate visitors but to do so, they must hold their engagement. In gallerist Ivan Karp's *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (1991),³² historian Stephen Greenblatt discusses the concept of resonance and wonder in exhibited objects; he states:

31. Auckland War Memorial Museum. "Huge News, Double Trouble," 2023. <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/visit/exhibitions/T-Rex>.

32. Karp, Ivan. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. New York, UNITED STATES: Smithsonian, 1991. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5337767>.

By resonance, I mean the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand. By wonder, I mean the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention.³³

Greenblatt argues that though an object can convey resonance, wonder requires contextualisation through how it is displayed. As it is the methods of display that shape the museum aesthetic, the museum aesthetic must evoke a sense of wonder. That sense of wonder is often created by assigning objects a sense of importance or value. For example, placing an object behind glass or a barrier in the company of similar objects indicates a sense of importance. The object becomes part of a greater narrative built by grouping relevant objects. In the early nineteenth century, objects displayed in the British Museum were given no supplementary information as to what they were. The idea was that the objects themselves gave the necessary context for the viewer to understand and learn about them. This practice also ‘protected’ museums from becoming a purveyor of false information, revealing its fallibility. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that this practice changed, and objects were labelled.

Authors Jordan Kistler and Will Tattersdill suggest in *What’s your dinosaur? Or, imaginative reconstruction and absolute truth in the museum space* (2019),³⁴ that the addition of “human interventions” opened museums to the problem that the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs* had faced. When objects are assigned a context, either by labelling or, in the case of the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs*, sculptural reconstruction, they become fixed to a specific time. With a label, their context can be modified simply by rewriting it, but physical reconstructions are permanent. The ideas and available information at the time of reconstruction become embedded in the object. For example, reconstructions of prehistoric animals, such as the *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs*, can quickly become outdated because of the speed at which information changes.

Though museums change their displays over time, it is not uncommon for antiquated displays and reconstructions from previous generations to linger because of the cost of refurbishing and renovating exhibition spaces. These outdated displays and reconstructions may no longer contribute to the authenticity of the objects they represent, as knowledge around them has changed. They are, however, an authentic embodiment of the era they were made and can often become time capsules of museum style and information. For example, the Natural History Gallery at the Horniman Museum in London has received little stylistic update since its opening in 1901³⁵ (see Figures 15 and 16). It features typical hallmark signs of a Natural History

33. Greenblatt, Stephen. “Resonance and Wonder.” In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. New York, UNITED STATES: Smithsonian, 1991.

34. Kistler, Jordan, and Will Tattersdill. “What’s Your Dinosaur? Or, Imaginative Reconstruction and Absolute Truth in the Museum Space.” *Museum and Society* 17, no. 3 (November 29, 2019): 377–89. <https://doi.org/10.29311/mas.v17i3.3219>.

35. Horniman Museum and Gardens. “The History of the Natural History Gallery.” 2023. <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/the-history-of-the-natural-history-gallery/>.

collection, but its methods of display feature large hand-crafted vitrines, outdated models of prehistoric animals, and one key element which I have found to be symbolic of a pre-digital museum aesthetic, labels made using a Leroy Lettering Set.³⁶ The use of specific colour palettes provides another example of pre-digital museum display methods. For example, the interior of vitrines were often painted in pastel or muted colours to show relationships between objects and allow viewers to make an instant connection between two vitrines of the same colour.

Over time, as interventions in museum spaces have taken place, traces of previous displays have accumulated. These traces shape the museum aesthetic. They may range from dioramas that depict long-outdated ideas about prehistoric life to small handwritten labels that have seemingly escaped a typed upgrade. Identifying and understanding the functions of pre-digital methods of museum display enables me to meaningfully utilise them in my artwork and evoke the atmosphere of a pre-digital museum aesthetic. I show this through the use of the vitrine,³⁷ the stylisation of labels, the colour palette, the interior design of the vitrine, image projection, and sound elements.

36. Musgrove, Stephen W. "MAKING EXHIBIT LABELS: A Mechanical Lettering System." *History News* 31, no. 10 (1976): 193–200.

37. Though not directly relevant to my project in terms of theme, there are several artists who have incorporated vitrines into their works in a functional capacity. See Jake and Dinos Chapman, *Hell* (1999–2000); Damien Hirst, *Forms Without Life* (1991); Fiona Hall, *Cell Culture* (2002).

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Figure 15. Unknown Photographer, *Photograph of the Natural History Gallery*, circa 1902-1904, photograph, Horniman Museum, London, <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/object/ARC/HMG/PH/NHG/MBP13/>.



Figure 16. Adrian Brown, *Horniman Museum*, 2014, photograph, Horniman Museum, London, <https://flic.kr/p/jVjrcP>

A study in Germany in 2020 investigated the reaction and relationship between displayed objects and their viewers in nine different museums.³⁸ It was found that museum visitors held value in objects they deemed authentic but had varying opinions on what constituted an object's authenticity. When asked to rate various statements about the authenticity of the displayed objects, the answer with the highest points was that the object should "Truly show how it was".³⁹ In this sense, objects need not be original to be valued.

Original objects are sometimes not displayed to better conserve and protect them, or even simply because a replica can work just as effectively in place of an original. For example, mounted dinosaur skeletons, such as Dippy the Diplodocus of the Natural History Museum (London), are an excellent example of where a replica can function in place of an original. Dippy is not a diplodocus but rather a plaster replica of the original skeleton in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History (Pittsburgh). Does being a replica make Dippy inauthentic? Dippy is not an authentic Diplodocus skeleton but an authentic replica of one that is identical in appearance. Despite not being a genuine skeleton, it communicates the same information as its counterpart, but most importantly, it evokes a sense of wonder.

The museum authentic dinosaur toy is not a replica of any object, but a museum-sanctioned or produced reconstruction. Despite this, museum authentic toys, such as the Invicta dinosaurs, touted their museum authentic status. Though not strictly a museum authentic object by the criteria laid out, by contextualising the museum authentic toy within the museum aesthetic through methods of display, they inherit the status of a museum authentic object. In my project, I take this concept further by applying the museum authentic status to pre-digital, non-museum authenticated toys, such as those found in cereal boxes (see Figure 17). In creating a fictitious museum, I can showcase the dinosaur as an everchanging form, regardless of its museum authentic status.

38. Schwan, Stephan, and Silke Dutz. "How Do Visitors Perceive the Role of Authentic Objects in Museums?" *Curator: The Museum Journal* 63, no. 2 (2020): 217–37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12365>.

39. *ibid.*



Figure 17. Cook, Jacob. *Test “archival” Photograph of Nabisco Stegosaurus*. 2023. Digital Photograph.

3.2 THE POP-PALAEO MUSEUM

My artwork, *The Pop-Palaeo Museum*, depicts a fictitious museum and explores pre-digital museum display methods. It explores the idea of a small museum that was put into storage for 30 years and is in the process of being unpacked. The concept for *The Pop-Palaeo Museum* is that it was established to document and exhibit palaeontology’s popular and fast-changing pop-cultural nature and ran for 38 years between 1955 and 1992. Within the narrative of *The Pop-Palaeo Museum*, this timeframe falls between the dinosaur ‘boom’ of the 1950s and concludes the year before *Jurassic Park* reframed popular palaeontological culture.

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Figure 18. Phinthong, Pratchaya. *Broken Hill*. 2013. Installation. <https://adrastuscollection.org/una-excavacion-arqueologica-humanizada-por-pratchaya-phinthong/>.



Figure 19. “Cabinetmaking, 1820-1960,” vignette from “Mining the Museum,” a 1992-1993 installation by artist Fred Wilson at the Maryland Historical Society. Courtesy of the Maryland Center for History and Culture, Library, Special Collections, Maryland Historical Society Archives MS 2008.

Often, when museums are represented in artists’ projects, it is a critique of museum practices of collecting and control in the presentation of culture, especially regarding anthropological collections tied to colonial projects, such as Thai artist Pratchaya Phinthong’s *Broken Hill* (2013) (see figure 18),⁴⁰ and American artist Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum* (1992) (see figure 19).⁴¹ Phinthong’s *Broken Hill* explores the displacement of anthropological museum artefacts in relation to their origins, and Wilson’s *Mining the Museum* explores how an object’s presentation within the museum can shape that object’s meaning. Not wanting my work to fall into the category of a critique of museum collection practices, I have created a homage to the museum experiences I grew up with. This is because my interest in museums lies in historical methods of display and the now disappearing pre-digital features of museum displays. These disappearing features result from the changing way museum institutions cater to their audiences. Artist Mark Dion describes this process;

40. Phinthong, Pratchaya. *Broken Hill*. 2013. Installation. <https://adrastuscollection.org/una-excavacion-arqueologica-humanizada-por-pratchaya-phinthong/>.

41. Wilson, Fred. *Mining the Museum*. 1993 1992. Installation. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25007622?seq=1>.

Firstly, museums have shifted to becoming educational institutions for younger visitors. As museums have focused more exclusively on children, many have become dumber and more dull for adult viewers. The second change has been the development of temporary thematic exhibitions which utilize sophisticated electronic technology. Curiously, these exhibits while being state of the art often become obsolete faster than older exhibits. This is because technology is very quickly outpaced, and also because exhibits take such a beating from frantic pushbutton kids. While these exhibits are strong in concept they often fail to inspire, since they ask as well as answer the questions and do not realize that the museum experience is only powerful when it is different from television and computer game play.⁴²

Conveying a sense of loss for pre-digital museums function as a means to try and establish an appreciation for the displays of that era that are still in function. Pre-digital museum displays are quickly disappearing in favour of simplistic displays and out-of-order iPad stands (see Figures 20 and 21). Over the course of my life, I have experienced Auckland War Memorial Museums' transition to a progressively digitally oriented museum. When I started visiting the museum as a child, it was nearing the end of its pre-digital era. Though some of the exhibitions were dated, they had an aura of care and warmth that their replacements have yet to capture. As such, the work made in this project is a love letter to pre-digital museums. It is possible that my views on museum displays are fuelled by nostalgia and fond memories of Auckland War Memorial Museum as a child, and this, in part, shapes my project. Protecting and conserving remaining displays from a pre-digital era in museums is important because it preserves the work of the maker and functions as a time capsule that reflects thinking and understanding from the time it was made "as part of a broader historical arc".⁴³

42. Dion, Mark. "The Natural History Box: Preservation, Categorization and Display." Presented at the Wunderkammer des Abendlandes, Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der BRD, Bonn, 1995. Transcription from Corrin, Lisa Graziose, Miwon Kwon, and Norman Bryson. Mark Dion. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997.

43. Wecker, Menachem. "The History and Future of the Once-Revolutionary Taxidermy Diorama | Science | Smithsonian Magazine." Smithsonian Magazine, October 11, 2016. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/ode-once-revolutionary-taxidermy-display-180960707/>.



Figure 20. Cook, Jacob. *Broken iPad-based Interactive Display at MOTAT*. Digital Photograph. Auckland, 2023.

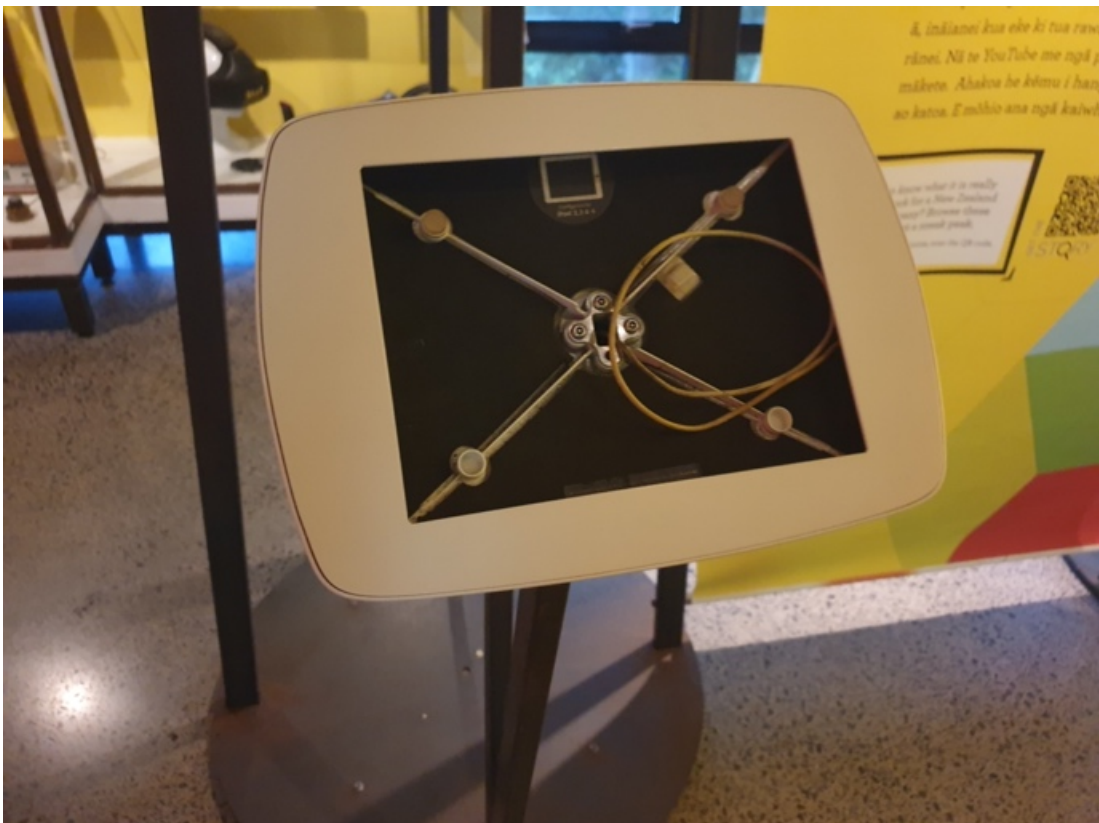


Figure 21. Cook, Jacob. *Broken iPad-based Interactive Display at MOTAT*. Digital Photograph. Auckland, 2023.

My installation aims to convey a sense of loss in several ways. There is the immediate presentation of pre-digital museum display methods intended to trigger nostalgic responses from the viewer. Such responses are also incentivised through the projected films' visual quality and childhood memory relating to dinosaur media. There is also a heightened sense of the depth of time when experiencing older depictions of prehistoric animals created by the juxtaposing senses of what can be defined as 'ages ago'. This heightened sense of the depth of time triggers a sense of 'anemoia', a term coined by author John Koenig, which he defines as "Nostalgia for a time or a place one has never known".⁴⁴ In relation to my artworks, anemoia is experienced as a result of the dinosaur subject matter that, when presented as familiar objects such as toys, remain enigmatic.

My project explores the process of combining the 'museum authentic' and the near plagiaristic nature of many of the toys of prehistoric animals of the twentieth century. I replicate a model that was intended for museum display, based on Vernon Edward's Iguanodon. With images supplied through the Bolton Museum, I 3D sculpt and then 3D print replica models (see Figures 22 and 23). What results is a technically 'museum authentic' model using a reconstruction based on scientific information nearly over a hundred years old. This practice of replication contributed to the idea of *The Pop-Palaeo Museum* as 3D sculpting allowed me to explore the dinosaur as a form. *The Pop-Palaeo Museum* takes that a step further as it functions as a tool to showcase the formal qualities of dinosaur toys without an exclusive focus on their scientific accuracy.

Other artists have explored the formal qualities of the dinosaurs. Artist Gregor Kregar expresses formal dinosaur qualities through the stylised nature of inflatable toys (see Figure 24). Kregar's dinosaurs are simplified into basic shapes.⁴⁵ My approach to the formal qualities of dinosaurs differs as I am interested in the fine details of their representation, such as skin detail, rather than a specific style of manufacture. This application aligns more closely with what is found in traditional museum reconstructions of prehistoric animals.

44. Koenig, John. "Anemoia." In *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, 168. United States: Simon & Schuster, 2021.

45. Kregar, Gregor. *Lost World*. Gow Langsford Gallery, November 2015.

<https://www.gowlansfordgallery.co.nz/exhibitions/lost-world?id=9030&cid=8944>.



Figure 22. Edwards, Vernon. *Iguanodon*. ca 1940. Plaster Cast. Hastings Museum and Art Gallery.



Figure 23. Cook, Jacob. *Iguanodon*. 2022. Digital Photograph.



Figure 24. Kregar, Gregor. *Lost World*. November 2015. Installation. <https://www.gowlangsfordgallery.co.nz/2015/11-november-5-december/lost-world/>.

Vitrines are synonymous with practices of collection and display and feature in countless museum-referencing artworks. For example, artist Fiona Hall regularly uses vitrines in a functional capacity to display her sculptures. This use introduces a museological narrative into her installations and highlights the role of functionality that vitrines play. My project uses two different styles of vitrine; one built by me and the other purchased. The first was created as a deep wall-mounted box with a Perspex front (see Figures 25 and 26). This vitrine's purpose involved focusing on the vitrine itself as an object rather than only serving to display objects. I incorporated stylised beading around the window and under the shelf, aged brass screws and hinges, and stained the wood to make it appear to be made of finer wood than pine. The design of this vitrine was inspired by the large vitrines at The McGregor Museum in Auckland University's biology building (see Figure 27). The McGregor Museum is one of the few Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland based examples left of a purely pre-digital museum, so it provides a sense of authentic reference for my work.

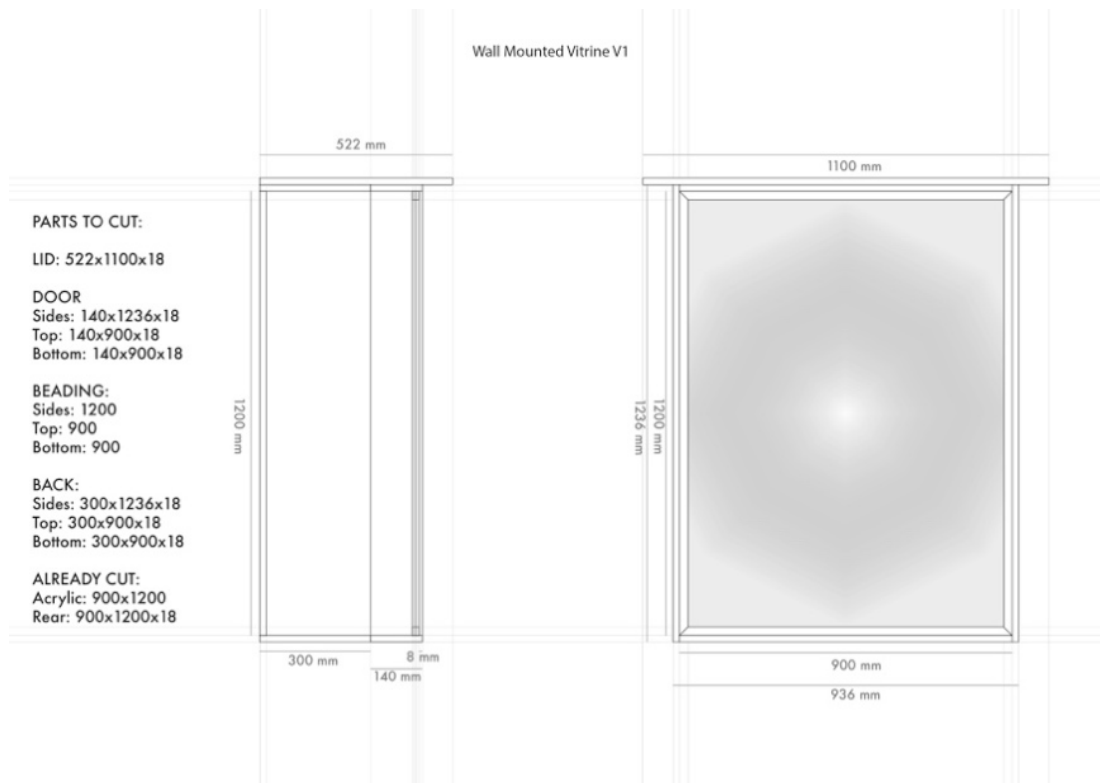


Figure 25. Cook, Jacob. "Vitrine Plans," 2022.



Figure 26. Cook, Jacob. *Vitrine*. 2022. Sculptural Installation.



Figure 27. Cook, Jacob. *The McGregor Museum*, Auckland University. 2022. Digital Photograph.

The second vitrine (see Figures 28 and 29) was originally from Auckland War Memorial Museum; I purchased it at a second-hand shop. The museum's digital collection suggests that the case was built in England sometime before 1924 and was installed with several others during the 1930s -1940s.⁴⁶ Its design is far more elaborate than any vitrine I could create. However, after being cleaned, the brass still looks tired, and layers of paint around the edges indicate various interior redesigns. As an authentic vessel from Auckland War Memorial Museum, the vitrine carries a historical weight, providing a sense of validity to *The Pop-Palaeo Museum's* past 'existence'.

46. Gill, Brian. J. "Mystery Auckland Museum Display Case,". Email. November 25, 2022.

**This image has been removed
for copyright reasons.**

Figure 28. Grierson, Aimer and Draffin. *Showcase Arrangement Plans Ground Floor, Sheet 7*, n.d. Auckland Museum Collections Online. https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/record/am_library-manuscriptsandarchives-11219?pht=True&k=floor%20p



Figure 29. The ex-Auckland Museum vitrine, in my studio, 2022

When designing the case's interior, I focused on conveying evidence of prior displays or changes over time. These design elements include display tropes of many pre-digital museums,

such as Leroy Lettering labels (see Figure 30), themed shelving, a muted colour palette, and stencilled lettering. Another benefit of this second former museum vitrine is its leftover number, which implies it was part of a series of cases meant to be read in order, expanding the historical narrative of *The Pop-Palaeo-Museum*.



Figure 30. Cook, Jacob. *Diplodocus*, 1974. 2023. Digital photograph of installation test.

Over the course of this project, I have built up a collection of pre-1990 dinosaur toys and models, both to function as part of *The Pop-Palaeo-Museum's* collection and to indulge my inner eight-year-old self, who is still obsessed with dinosaurs. They represent different eras, styles, makers, materials, and regions. The latter museum vitrine is used in the final exhibition as *The Pop-Palaeo-Museum's* "Invicta" case. As discussed earlier, the Invicta models were the public's access to 'museum authentic' models. With their direct relationship to museums, the Invicta models are the most appropriate and fitting to accompany the vitrine in the installation. As the Invicta dinosaurs were released over the course of approximately 20 years, the display case housing them is used to show the passage of that time. I use the vitrine to highlight how museum displays accommodate new additions and evolving narratives; it reflects a move toward a less intentional object-oriented method of display.

Buttercup the Iguanodon (see Figure 31) is a CNC-routed polystyrene head made from the 3D scan of an *Invicta Iguanodon*. The context for *Buttercup* within *The Pop-Palaeo Museum* narrative is explained using labels. This narrative concerns how the museum had a life-sized version of the *Invicta Iguanodon*, but only the head was found in storage. *Buttercup* magnifies the formal qualities of the toy they are based on. Through the presence *Buttercup* occupies in the space alongside the toys, viewers are able to establish the dinosaur as a form removed from their biological status.



Figure 31. Cook, Jacob. *Buttercup the Iguanodon* (Early Stages). 2022. Digital Photograph.

Though the primary museum theme for this project is display methods, cataloguing and storage have also been explored. The inner mechanisms of museum institutions are something that Mark Dion regularly references in his artworks. Dion's works, such as *The Department of Marine Animal Identification of the City of New York (Chinatown Division)*⁴⁷, utilise storage

47. Dion, Mark. *The Department of Marine Animal Identification of the City of New York (Chinatown Division)*. 1992. Installation.

units and processes of specimen collection and preparation. He uses these as platforms to interrogate systems of classification, often working directly with museum collections.⁴⁸

It is common for museums to keep photographic records of their collection, the style of which has mostly stayed the same since it became common practice. I created a collection of 35mm slides of the dinosaur collection I have amassed. These slides, projected with two analogue slide projectors, showcase the variation and change in dinosaur toys and models. Highlighting this variation and change demonstrates that outdated forms of pop-palaeontological media can still function as tools to convey the dinosaur as a constantly changing form.

Dinosaurs, The Terrible Lizards (1986 Revised Edition) is a 1970 educational film by Wah Ming Chang that utilises beautifully crafted models and stop-motion animation. The film was distributed to schools, libraries, and museums as a teaching resource introducing basic ideas of the Mesozoic age. This film is included in the *Pop-Palaeo Museum's* collection as an example of popular informative media released within the timeframe of *The Pop-Palaeo Museum's* 'existence'. When deciding how it should be projected, the initial plan was to project it straight onto a screen, but after a test projection onto *Buttercup the Iguanodon*, several of the shots in the film lined up perfectly with the shape of *Buttercup's* head (see figure 32). This projection method functions as an appropriate disruption to the experience of the film. It fits within the narrative of someone unpacking the museum and testing the equipment resulting in a serendipitous moment. Outside the narrative, the compositional synchronicity further highlights the dinosaur's formal qualities. Because I incorporate multiple projected elements in *The Pop-Palaeo Museum*, I refer to works such as Tony Oursler's *Face to Face (2012)* (see Figure 33) when considering the relationship between these projections and how they influence each other and their surrounding environment.

48. Corrin, Lisa Graziose, Miwon Kwon, and Norman Bryson. *Mark Dion*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997.



Figure 32. Cook, Jacob. *Projection Test of Dinosaurs, The Terrible Lizards (Revised Edition) Projection on Buttercup the Iguanodon*. 2023. 16mm Film, Hard Coated Polystyrene.

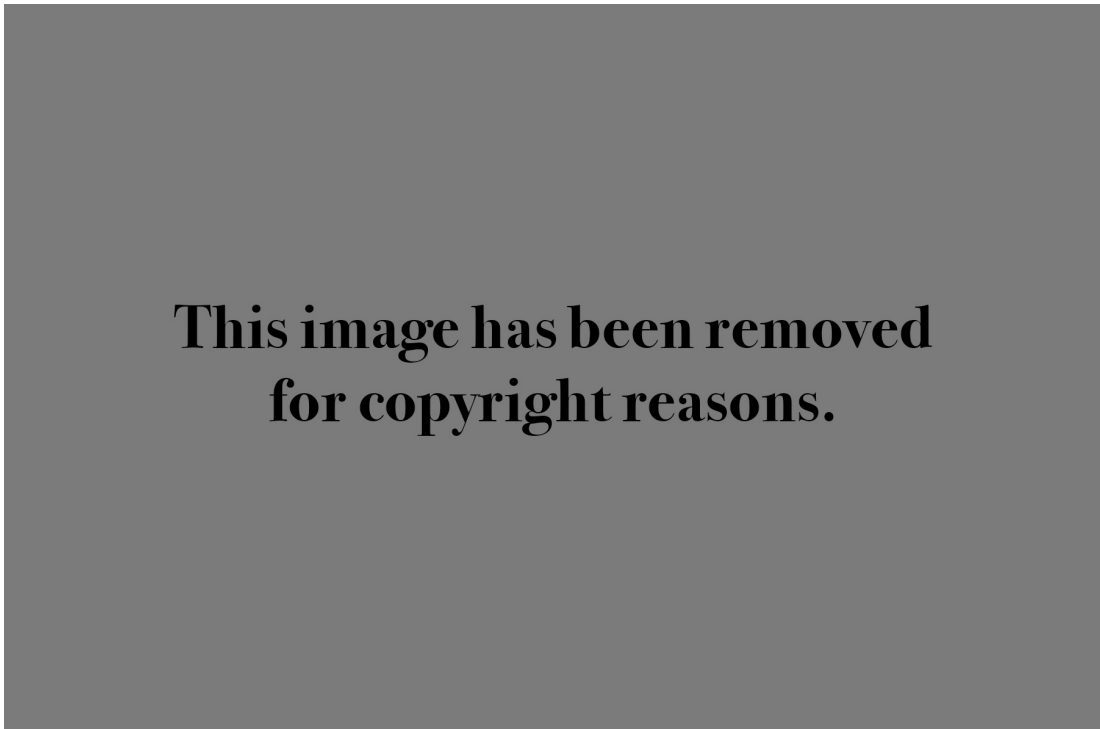


Figure 33. Oursler, Tony. *Face to Face*. 2012. Installation.

Pre-digital museum displays serve a purpose by allowing viewers access to a snapshot of historical knowledge. Display methods used in a pre-digital era impact viewer engagement by

holding attention and evoking wonderment in ways that digital museum display methods cannot. For example, the inclusion of a large-scale dinosaur model occupies a physical presence that an image on an iPad cannot. My installation, *The Pop-Palaeo Museum*, is a homage to those pre-digital methods of museum display, illustrating that within the context of popular palaeontological culture, outdated does not infer irrelevance.

CONCLUSION

A museum visit can allow an experience of something not available anywhere else and enable engagement with authentic objects in ways not easily replicated outside of a museum context. In examining if outdated museum displays still serve a purpose, I have established the importance of object authenticity and the authenticity to the museum aesthetic. The museum aesthetic is founded on the commonalities of museum display methods. Such methods influence viewer engagement, hold attention, and evoke wonder. Outdated museum displays and reconstructions remain an authentic embodiment of the time in which they were created and contribute to the knowledge timeline of the displayed objects.

I utilise methods of pre-digital museum displays that include large vitrines, stylised labels, muted colour palettes, and image projection. Used collectively, these evoke a pre-digital museum aesthetic. Museum objects do not need to be original to hold value. Replica objects that are identical in appearance to the original communicate the same information and can evoke the same sense of wonderment. Dinosaur toys can assume museum authentic status through the method in which they are displayed. *The Pop-Palaeo Museum* expands this idea by including dinosaur toy collections curated alongside my own 3D sculptures and 35mm slides taken of my pre-digital age dinosaur collection.

The Pop-Palaeo Museum honours historical methods of display that are disappearing in a digital age. The museum's representation in my artwork contrasts with the simplistic iPad-centred experiences found in many museums today. Pre-digital museum displays serve a purpose by reflecting the learnings of past makers while holding a place on the arc of historical knowledge.

By reigniting the infatuation I experienced as a child with prehistory and museum displays and integrating these with a multimedia practice of installation, sculpture, photography, and collection, I have constructed a replica archive of museum display methods as an authentic archive of pop-palaeontological media. Approaching palaeoart from a non-scientific background and separating the formal qualities of dinosaur representations from the animals they represent, highlights how formal qualities convey the dinosaur as an ever-changing form. Similarly, focusing on pre-digital methods of museum display instead of the objects displayed, heightens the atmosphere that disappearing pre-digital museum displays convey. By combining long outdated dinosaur representations in the form of

toys and models, and pre-digital museum display methods, a sense of loss is established. Through this sense of loss, I hope viewers of *The Pop-Palaeo Museum* find a greater appreciation for the surviving pre-digital museum displays and historical representations of prehistoric animals; they are afforded access to a continuum of knowledge so as to appreciate the ever-changing state of the dinosaur.

INSTALLATION AND EXHIBITION

St Paul Street Gallery Three, AUT

8-10 June 2022



Figure 34. Exhibition View (Footprints leading to Gallery Three), St Paul Street.



Figure 35. Exhibition View (Footprints leading to Gallery Three), St Paul Street.



Figure 36. Exhibition View (Entrance view), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 37. Exhibition View (Front view), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 38. Exhibition View (Vitrine top, open doors), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 39. Exhibition View (Vitrine detail), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 40. Exhibition View (Vitrine detail), St Paul Street Gallery Three.

Cryptoclidus Oxoniensis, c.1930
Vernon Edwards, London, England

The rise of the Museum Authentic:

Mass-produced plastic dinosaurs of the 1950s and 60s often lacked detail, whilst accurate dinosaur models were only available to Museums and Universities. 1974 saw the start of the collaboration between Invicta Plastics Ltd. and the British Museum of Natural History. The models were sculpted by Arthur Hayward, who drew inspiration from the paintings of Zdenek Burian. In 1989, American company Safari Ltd began a collaboration with the Carnegie Museum, and unlike Invicta, Safari Ltd's models were painted. To combat this, Invicta has now released painted versions of their figures.

Behind the Iron Curtain:

Though similar in style to the Invicta Dinosaurs, these models are scaled-down copies of the life-sized sculptures in the Kleinwelka Saurier Park in Germany. They are one of a few examples of dinosaur toys to come out of East Germany and, along with the life-sized sculptures, were sculpted by Franz Grub.

Figure 41. Exhibition View (Vitrine detail), St Paul Street Gallery Three.

Dinosaur Museum Collection, 1987
Invicta Plastics Ltd, Leicester, England

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | STEGOSAURUS 1975 | 15 | BARYONYX 1989 |
| 2 | GLYPTODON 1975 | 16 | APLIOSAUR 1989 |
| 3 | TRICERATOPS 1975 | 17 | MUTTABURRASAUURUS 1989 |
| 4 | WOOLLY MAMMOTH 1975 | 18 | LAMBEOSAURUS 1992 |
| 5 | TYRANNOSAURUS REX 1977 | 19 | DIMETRODON 1992 |
| 6 | IGUANODON 1980 | 20 | STEGOSAURUS WHITE RUBBER VARIANT |
| 7 | PTERANODON 1978 | 21 | TRICERATOPS WHITE RUBBER VARIANT |
| 8 | ICHTHYOSAURUS 1986 | 22 | MEGALOSAURUS PAINTED VARIANT |
| 9 | PLESIOSAUR 1978 | 23 | WOOLLY MAMMOTH BLACK PRODUCTION TEST |
| 10 | CETIOSAURUS 1985 | 24 | GLYPTODON UNCOMMON LIME GREEN VARIANT |
| 11 | BRACHIOSAURUS 1984 | 25 | STEGOSAURUS UNCOMMON DARK GREEN
VARIANT |
| 12 | APATOSAURUS 1987 | | |
| 13 | MAMENCHISAURUS 1988 | | |
| 14 | TROODON 1988 | | |

Figure 42. Exhibition View (Vitrine detail), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 43. Exhibition View (Slide projector on crate), St Paul Street Gallery Three.

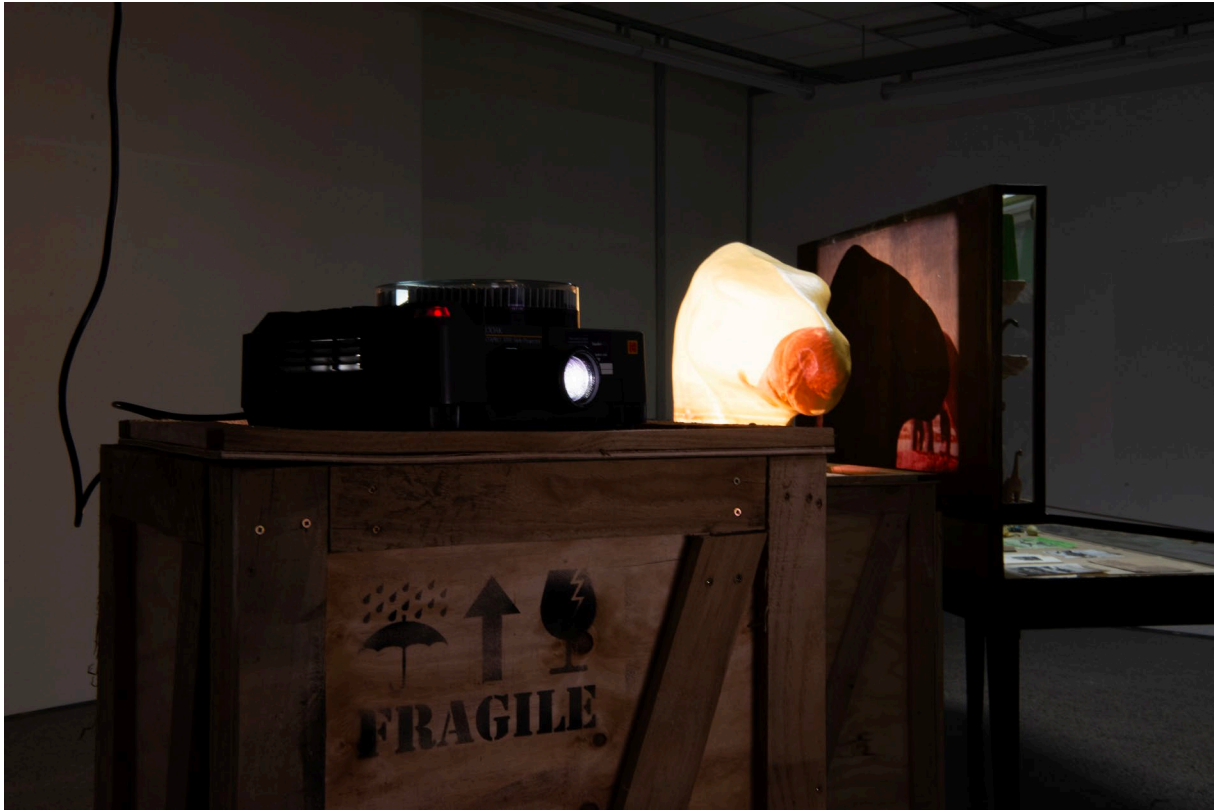


Figure 44. Exhibition View (Slide projector on crate), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 45. Exhibition View (Rear left view), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 46. Exhibition View (Slide projector on crate), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 47. Exhibition View (16mm projector with looper on crate), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 48. Exhibition View (Buttercup with projected film), St Paul Street Gallery Three.



Figure 49. Exhibition View (Buttercup with projected film), St Paul Street Gallery Three.

Link to video and audio footage of The Pop-Palaeo Museum:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHdG_OXzyPc

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