

V&A

Victoria and Albert
Museum

Stores

EAST
105

X-ray the Invisible

Hidden Identities in Museum Objects

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I used chat GPT to assist in the scene rendering environment.

Museums store objects, but many stories remain **hidden.**

Most museum collections are kept in storage, where objects are separated from their context, and their stories become incomplete.

X-RAY THE INVISIBLE

01



Objects are separated from their original people, places and use.

Museum labels often
simplify complex
histories into fixed
descriptions.

Marginalised identities,
including LGBTQ+ histories,
can remain unrecorded,
hidden or erased.



Reading the Objects

Identifying hidden layers in museum collections.



INTERACTIVE EXPLORATION

Hover or select an object to scan.
Reveal what remains unseen.

SURFACE

SCAN

REVEAL

01 MEMORY

Personal traces



A personal object carrying traces of emotional memory and absence.



SCAN

02 POWER

Constructed narratives



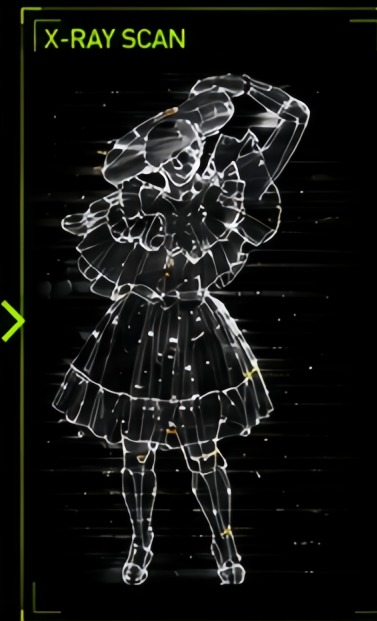
An idealised image that reflects constructed history and hidden labour.



SCAN

03 IDENTITY

Unseen narratives



A garment suggesting presence, while identity—including LGBTQ+ narratives—remains invisible.



SCAN



LEVEL

L1

L2

L3

L1 Surface

What is visible

L2 Context

What is partially told

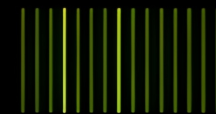
L3 Hidden

What remains unseen



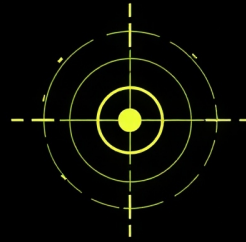
X-RAY INTERFACE

Revealing what is stored, questioned, or erased.



How Might We

Design questions that guide the creation of interactive experiences for hidden narratives.



We move from **observation** to **intervention**.



01 Reveal Hidden Stories

How might we reveal hidden stories behind stored objects?

SURFACE
What we see

CONTEXT
What is partially told

HIDDEN
What remains unseen

SCAN • DETECT • REVEAL

02 Expose Filters

How might we expose what museum narratives filter or erase?

The official record shows [REDACTED]
a story of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
hooús many voices have been
[REDACTED]
benre ilia's [REDACTED] nat left out.
Enitre perspectives, [REDACTED]
experiences, [REDACTED] hand
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] identities were never
[REDACTED]
recorded.

boncankla uitdoo, impactic toot, from

boncankla uitdoo, impactic toot, from

QUESTION • CHALLENGE • UNCOVER



OMITTED
Not included



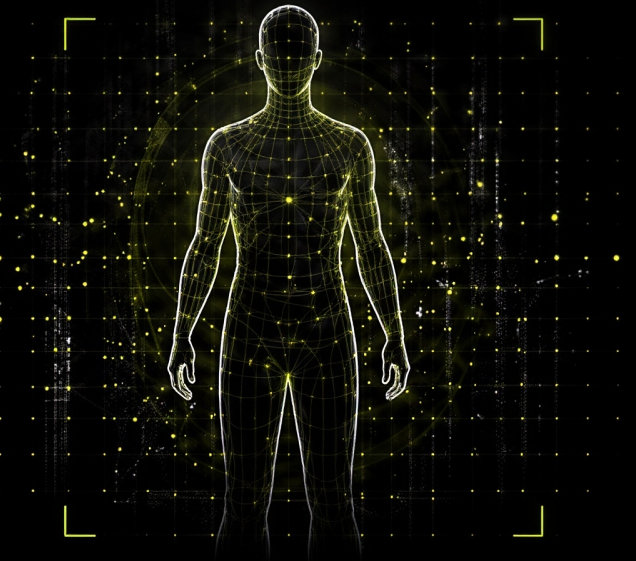
FILTERED
Selectively presented



ERASED
Deliberately removed

03 Make Identities Visible

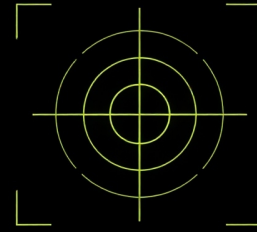
How might we make marginalised identities visible through interaction?



RECOGNISE • EMPATHISE • EMPOWER

X-ray as an Interface

Revealing hidden narratives through interaction.



The X-ray interface allows users to scan museum objects and **uncover hidden layers** of meaning.



THE CONCEPT

X-ray is used as a **metaphorical interface** to uncover invisible narratives embedded in museum collections.



MULTI-LAYERED

Objects hold multiple hidden narratives.



INTERACTIVE

Users actively scan to reveal and explore.



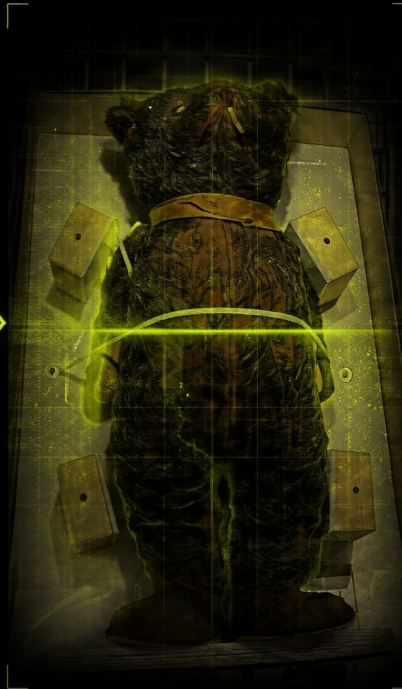
MULTI-PERSPECTIVE

Multiple truths emerge from one object.

NORMAL VIEW



SCANNING...



X-RAY VIEW

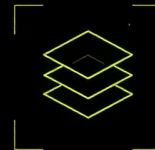


HOW IT WORKS



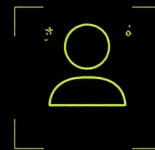
01 SCAN

Users scan objects to activate hidden layers.



02 REVEAL

Hidden stories and narratives are gradually uncovered.



03 INTERPRET

Users interpret multiple perspectives beyond the official narrative.

THE EXPERIENCE FLOW



OBJECT

Encounter an object in the collection.



SCAN

Use the interface to scan and activate the X-ray.



REVEAL

Explore hidden layers and untold stories.



UNDERSTAND

Form new understandings and connections.

07 Interface Design

Designing the X-ray interaction experience.

An interactive interface that allows visitors to **scan** museum objects and explore hidden narratives through **layered visualisations**.



REVEAL

Uncover what is hidden.



EXPLORE

Navigate multiple layers.



UNDERSTAND

Gain deeper perspectives.



REFLECT

Form new meanings.

OBJECT INFO



OBJECT
Teddy Bear

ORIGIN
Museum Storage

MATERIAL
Fabric, Stuffing,
Thread, Metal

DATE
Unknown

ABOUT THIS OBJECT

A well-loved teddy bear, showing traces of repair and wear. It represents intimate memories and personal attachments that are often left out of official museum narratives.

THEMES

- Memory
- Attachment
- Care
- Absence

X-RAY INTERFACE

● SCAN MODE



NORMAL VIEW



X-RAY VIEW



LAYERS

01 Surface

The visible outer appearance.



02 Internal

The hidden structure and materials.



03 Memory

Emotional traces and personal histories.



SCANNING...

64%



SCAN



REVEAL LAYERS



NEXT LAYER

HOW TO USE



01 ALIGN

Place the object within the frame and adjust the position.



02 SCAN

Tap 'Scan' to activate the X-ray scanning process.



03 EXPLORE

Use 'Reveal Layers' or 'Next Layer' to navigate through different views.



04 UNDERSTAND

Read the layer information to discover hidden narratives.

08 USER JOURNEY

From passive viewing to active interpretation.

The interface guides visitors through seeing, scanning, exploring and reflecting, turning hidden narratives into personal understanding.



SEE

Notice what is visible.



SCAN

Reveal what is hidden.



EXPLORE

Navigate multiple layers.



REFLECT

Form new meanings.

01 APPROACH



02 SELECT



03 SCAN



04 EXPLORE



05 REFLECT



CHOOSE AN OBJECT



TEDDY BEAR



PAINTING



IDENTITY



SCANNING...

64%

LAYERS

01



SURFACE

02

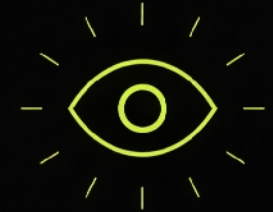


INTERNAL

03



MEMORY



What stories are missing?
Who decided what we see?
What else is hidden?



Visitor approaches the interactive display.



User selects an object from the collection.



User activates the scan to reveal hidden layers.



User moves between Surface, Internal and Memory layers.

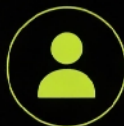


User reflects on what is missing, erased or unrecorded.



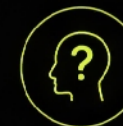
PASSIVE VIEWER

Observes what is shown.



ACTIVE EXPLORER

Interacts, discovers and connects.



CRITICAL INTERPRETER

Questions, interprets and forms new meaning.

APPLICATION SCENARIO

The X-ray interface integrated into the museum environment.

Installed as a large-scale interactive display, the interface invites visitors to **explore hidden histories** behind objects and question what is unseen.



IMMERSIVE

Draws visitors in through scale and atmosphere.



INTERACTIVE

Encourages touch, control and exploration.



REFLECTIVE

Opens space for multiple voices and stories.



V&A MUSEUM - LEARNING & RESEARCH CENTRE (LEVEL 2)

A space for discovery, dialogue and reflection.



“

Objects hold more than what is shown. They hold what is hidden, missing, and forgotten.

”

REFLECTION

Museums do not only preserve objects.

They also preserve decisions:
what is shown,
what is hidden,
and whose stories
remain invisible.

X-ray the Invisible invites visitors to question institutional narratives through interaction, scanning and layered exploration.



V&A MUSEUM - LEARNING & RESEARCH CENTRE (LEVEL 2)

A space for discovery, dialogue and reflection.



“

WHAT REMAINS UNSEEN
CAN STILL SHAPE CULTURAL MEMORY.

”

X-RAY THE INVISIBLE

V&A MUSEUM - LEARNING &
RESEARCH CENTRE (LEVEL 2)



Objects hold more
than what is shown.

A space for discovery,
dialogue and reflection.

I used chat GPT to assist in the scene rendering environment.

END OF PRESENTATION

NOT EVERYTHING PRESERVED
IS FULLY REVEALED.

Design Statement

X-Ray the Invisible is an interactive museum interface that reveals the **hidden narratives** behind objects. Using the visual metaphor of X-ray, the project invites visitors to go **beyond the surface** and explore the stories, memories and traces that are normally **unseen**.

X-ray does not just show what is inside the object — it represents a **different way of seeing**. It encourages visitors to question what is displayed, what is omitted, and whose stories are being told.

The interface combines scan animation, layer switching and spatial interaction to create a process of **discover**. Visitors can select an object, scan it, and uncover **multiple layers** including its physical structure, history and emotional meaning. The experience turns passive viewing into active exploration.

This project is designed for the V&A Museum context, connecting research, design and space. By integrating digital interaction into the exhibition environment, it creates a **deeper and more personal** museum experience.

Ultimately, X-Ray the invisible is not only an interface, but also a reflection on **visibility, memory** and **power**. It asks: what remains hidden in museums, and how can design help reveal it?

Core Findings

- 1 Museum objects carry **hidden stories** beyond their visible form.
- 2 Traditional labels and displays often **simplify or omit** important narratives.
- 3 Multisensory and **layered interaction** enhances understanding and connection.
- 4 Digital interaction in physical space makes the **invisible more accessible**.

Reflection: Design can reveal what is concealed and create space for more voices.

References

Theoretical Framework

- Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992). Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge
- Bennett, T. (2010). The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics

Case References

- V&A Museum Exhibitions
- The V&A LGBTQ+ Display and Collections
- Tate Modern – Digital Interaction Installations

Data Sources

- V&A Museum Collection Database
- Museum Association (UK) Reports
- Visitor Studies and Interaction Design Research

Territories & Interfaces

Museum · Objects · People
Physical Space · Digital Layer

MA Comm Design 2026

X-Ray the Invisible
Interactive Museum Project

 V&A Museum, London, UK
51°29'11.7"N 0°10'44.0"W