

# **FINAL TRANSCRIPT**

Spool No. DOU10806  
FOUA634R

## **AD317 VC1 Religion Today**

Band One: St Mungo Museum of Religious Art and Life

Band Two: Perspectives on a Princess

Band Three: An Anglican Perspective

Band Four: An Islamic Perspective

Band Five: A Druidic Perspective

Band Six: Religion and Modernisation; Sweden

Band Seven: Religion and Modernisation; Egypt

**Producer: Tessa Coombs**

OU © Logo Title Sequence

AD317 Specially Shot  
Generic Titles

Specially composed music by  
Stuart Hancock dur: 20”  
Dreamscope GAL 28: Track 37  
(dur: 0’30”)

AD317: RELIGION TODAY  
VC1: BAND 1

St Mungo Museum of Religious Art and Life

13’ 25”

Music used from 2 library CDs :  
CHAP AV168 ‘Ethereal World’ Track 18 Cycles of Life  
Sonoton SCD 254 ‘Minimal’ Track 23 Moving Questions

2 exterior shots of St  
Mungo museum.  
BBC library footage  
ex ‘Late Show’ 08/04/93  
MRS47964. Specially shot  
by BBC for late show.

MARK O’NEILL

The museum arose out of what I think of as a very Glaswegian mixture of pragmatism and principle. It was originally intended to be a visitor centre for the cathedral, the cathedral ran out of funds, so the city rescued the building and asked us to turn it into a museum. I suggested that it should be a museum of religion, because I believe that museums are capable of addressing really important issues in society.... and there is no more important subject than the meaning of life.

HARRY DUNLOP, CURATOR

The museum represents the 6 main world religions that are present in Glasgow, although the museum does look at the importance of religion across the world and across time.

c. 00:00:46 - 00:01:03  
Pan up Ganesh (elephant )  
statue  
pan around Egyptian  
mummy head  
CU Islamic tile? /  
calligraphy detail

CU embroidered star of  
David.  
CU gold cross  
CU ?  
CU picture of Krishna  
CU head of Buddhist  
statue  
All artefacts in St Mungo  
Museum.  
BBC library footage  
ex 'Late Show' 08/04/93  
MRS47964. Specially shot  
by BBC for late show.

**MARK O'NEILL**

it was a problem in the museum making sure we didn't over represent religions that were, how shall I say, good at artefacts. It could have been a very good Catholic, Hindu museum with a fairly strong Buddhist representation.

**MARK O'NEILL**

The difficulty in representing aniconic religions meant that we had to be very creative in searching out objects, representing Judaism with Dora Holzhandler and representing Islam with this amazing painting by Ahmed Moustafa where the calligraphic tradition of Islam and its geometric tradition are unified in a really visually very powerful piece where the 99 Attributes of Allah are represented in the work.

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## MARK O'NEILL

We made a deliberate decision to include some of the very best art we had in the collection and very ordinary mundane things that would in art galleries be considered kitsch and tacky in one place. Partly to confront people with the aesthetic decisions they make....But its also about trying to represent belief.... taking objects into a museum usually reduces their meaning - they lose their original meaning whether that be historical or spiritual or religious. We wanted to put them in a museum where its not exactly a spiritual space but we wanted to make it possible for believers to have a spiritual experience here. So it blurs the boundary between the spiritual and the secular quite consciously and it tries to restore some resonance of the original meaning back to the objects which most art galleries don't do.

Mamta playing  
instrument.  
Specially shot by BBC /  
MK

### **MAMTA YADAV, HINDU**

I find as a Hindu representation of Hinduism, Hindu gods in St Mungo's very appealing because as a Hindu if I walk in to St Mungo's I find my deities, my gods who sit in my house and I pray them, finding them sitting there is something that establishes a link between me and the museum.

Well having gods outside temple does not mean that they have lost their sanctity. Yes, when you go to museum, you go with a different frame of mind, you go with a different focus, you don't go to pray there. But to find them sitting there inevitably, when I go into St M's and I find that Shiva's statue is there, I take my shoes off, so that action establishes that it hasn't lost a sanctity....so its not going to temple, but to see a god there I would do my salutation and have the same feeling perhaps.

### **HARRY DUNLOP**

After we opened all the faiths had something to say about what was on display. for example in the case of Hinduism we raised the image of Shiva into a stone plinth because the Hindus felt it was disrespectful to Shiva for visitors to walk on the same level. So we did indeed include a plinth.

### **MARK O'NEILL**

As the curator of this museum, my role has been to a) represent the religions accurately in an academic curatorial detached way, but also to represent them in such a way that people who believe, represent them in a sense from the inside in a way that believers would recognise as well.

### MARK O'NEILL

The museum has provoked violent reactions and including one object being attacked - but mainly among fundamentalists and the values of the museum are civic values where everybody is entitled to live together with mutual respect. so inevitably people who believe that their religion is the true religion to the exclusion of all others, have reacted either in disagreement or in rare cases with violent anger against the museum.

**DAVID STRAIN**

For me the truth claims of Christianity are exclusive. That means that it presents us with a world view that is self contained and objectively true to the exclusion of other truth claims and other world views. that means that when its placed alongside other religions with equal weight, my concern as an evangelical Christian my concern would be that that presents Christianity as one among many paths to God - a picture that I couldn't accept.

**HARRY DUNLOP**

For some people the museum has posed a particular threat to their faith and they have carried out acts of vandalism within the museum. The most notable act of vandalism was the damage inflicted on the image of the Hindu god Shiva which was pushed over in front of members of the public and this was particularly insulting to members of the Hindu community who'd performed a ceremony of welcome.

**MARK O'NEILL**

we thought there would be a conflict between monotheism and 'paganism'.  
.... We actually thought it would be the African screen which is a 'pagan' object in room next to amazing pieces of Islamic and Christian art.

**MAMTA YADAV**

I would say I was saddened rather than surprised or shocked because I do know that there would be people who would find there were other religions taking over their religion sometimes. And they might find that here is another religion from another part of the world being represented so strongly in their museum is not something that is acceptable to everybody.

**HARRY DUNLOP**

In both the gallery of Religious Life and the Scottish galleries we have what are known as talk back boards and these have been elements of these galleries right from the very beginning.....

One of the important things about the talk-back boards is that it allows visitors to interact with each other and people who write the comments sometimes have another comment added on from another visitor who agrees or disagrees and sometimes real debates can rage through these

boards. A debate raged for a long time about the photograph showing female genital mutilation and also one raged about sin and one raged on about truth, so they are fascinating things and a different element for our visitors to explore.

### **HARRY DUNLOP**

We do continually add to the museum, and this in fact is based on the talk-back boards - we do have talk back boards with comments that complain about the lack of material from the pagan traditions and so as a result we added a tree a cluted? tree just beside the Zen garden. And a culted? tree is a place where people can hang rags, tie rags onto the tree with their own intention. As a way of leaving some thing behind to commemorate their experience in the museum. That tree was given to us by a group of pagans who'd performed a ceremony in a shopping centre in Glasgow. And I had been thinking about having a tree and just within two weeks the tree arrived, so , and visitors have responded whole heartedly to adding their own little pieces of cloth to this tree so its very much a permanent fixture in the museum.



### HARRY DUNLOP

I would say this museum is very much a living museum and can't exist really without engaging in the reality of the society we live in. I think that is very important and this museum will never be correct and it will never be a finished religion. The museum will constantly evolve as the world of religion constantly evolves.