

The Memory of Mankind

British Museum

Review 2002/2004

*Ben Okri described the British Museum
as the 'memory of mankind' in a speech
given at the opening of the exhibition
Museum of the Mind in April 2003.*

British Museum

'Aimed at universality and belonging to the nation', the British Museum was founded by Act of Parliament in 1753 to implement the will of Sir Hans Sloane, the noted physician and naturalist, who bequeathed to the nation his extraordinary collection of some 71,000 objects, a library and herbarium.

Opening to the public in 1759, this was a new type of institution, its collection held in trust for all people everywhere. Today the British Museum retains many of its founding values; it is a living museum of mankind for mankind, actively acquiring, displaying and interpreting material culture from the earliest known human artefacts to the work of contemporary societies.

The Museum has over 90 visitor galleries and rooms in London, housed on three floors. The famous mid-nineteenth century buildings in Bloomsbury were greatly enhanced in the year 2000 by the opening of the Great Court, a spectacular scheme which has nearly doubled the public space and simplified orientation.

The 1753 Act directed that entry be given free of charge to 'all studious and curious Persons'. So enjoyment has been linked with scholarship and education throughout the Museum's history. It is an authoritative centre for research with programmes of lectures, conferences and courses.

Beyond London, the British Museum makes its collection visible throughout the UK in partnership with other museums and institutions, while its exhibitions, curators, researchers and archaeologists travel the world. In doing so the Museum is affirming that it exists to give understanding and meaning to the life of mankind, by telling its story in many different places and contexts.

The Parthenon Sculptures remain a continual fascination for visitors.



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Trustees' Foreword

The past two years have seen major changes at the British Museum in its governance, direction and priorities. Neil MacGregor, who joined us as Director in August 2002 from The National Gallery, brought with him inspirational skills. He and his Deputy Directors Andrew Burnett and Dawn Austwick are well into their stride.

Those who work at the Museum and visit it are manifestly invigorated. New galleries have been opened to the public in London. The collection has been made more widely available than ever before to sister museums. The results of conservation and research in all areas of the collection have been made public through exhibitions, publications and the internet.

Much of this has been possible only because of the generosity of our supporters. The Government provides the core of the Museum's funding, but the collection's full potential cannot be realised without the additional help of so many private and corporate friends around the world. The Trustees would like to thank them warmly.

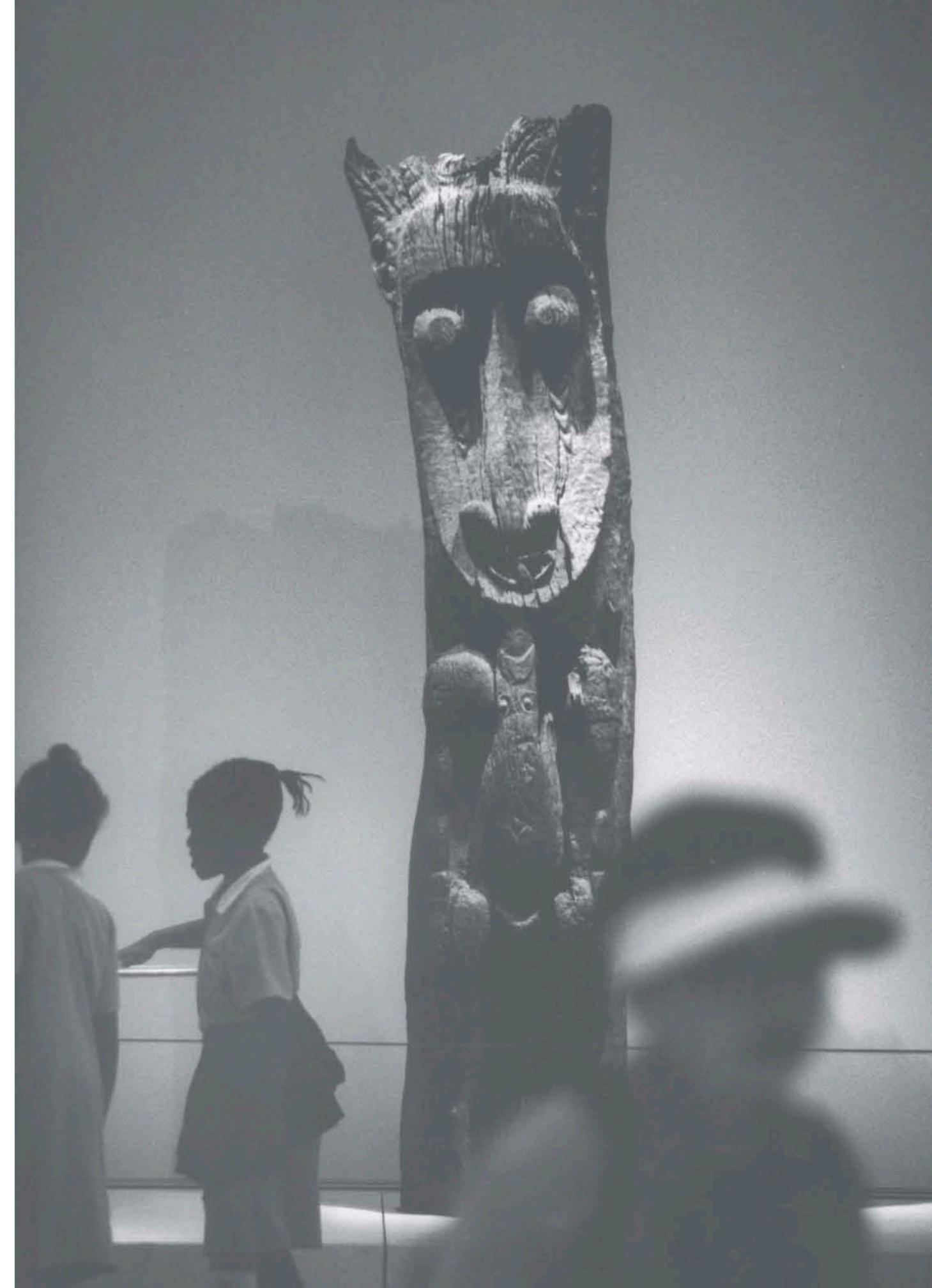
We should also like to thank all of the Museum's employees and volunteers. Their dedication and hard work, often in difficult circumstances, are behind all the achievements reviewed in these pages.

In June 2002, Graham Greene, our Chairman, and Robert Anderson, our Director, both retired. Together they had presided over the historic re-ordering of the Museum following the removal of the British Library, and the conception and realisation of the Great Court.

At every stage, they worked closely with Claus Moser, whose legendary powers of persuasion turned hopes and dreams into stone, metal and glass. These three between them reshaped the Museum for the new century. After Robert Anderson's departure we were exceptionally fortunate that Chris Jones was willing to shoulder all responsibilities for a few months, deftly steering the Museum through this testing period. In doing so he won the respect, affection and gratitude of all.

John Boyd, Chairman of Trustees

The new Wellcome Trust Gallery, which opened in October 2003, explores how people seek wellbeing for themselves and their communities.



The Director

With the return to Bloomsbury of the African, Pacific and American collections from the Museum of Mankind the British Museum is once again able to show in one building the cultural achievements of the whole world over hundreds of thousands of years. There is probably no other place on the planet where the visitor can gain so clear an overview of what human beings have made since we first became able to make. There is certainly no other place where the structures of thought, belief and power that lay behind those artefacts' making, and informed their collecting, can be so richly studied. It was without hyperbole that Ben Okri could describe the collection as 'the memory of mankind'.

Memory, as we all know, is identity. Individually and communally we define ourselves through the ordering of our past. To lose memory is in one sense to cease to be. If the world is to sort out what it is – the many conflicting things that it is – it needs to be able to consider and interpret its past. The British Museum was set up by Parliament in 1753 precisely to make that possible; for that reason we took memory as the theme of the exhibition to celebrate the Museum's 250th anniversary (see page 10) both in London and on an extensive tour overseas.

In 1753, the best way to enable the Museum to play that role was to place the collection in the middle of London, then as now by far the most populous city in the Kingdom, and the biggest and most cosmopolitan city in Europe; and to make the collection available to all free of charge. That still holds good today, but it is clearly no longer enough.

Millions of people worldwide consult the Museum's many websites every year, and they are required reading for parts of the UK's school curriculum. But at the heart of the Museum is the object, and the understanding that only a dialogue with the object itself can bring.

We are therefore trying to ensure that great things can be seen and enjoyed not just in the context of the world story told in the Museum itself, but can also travel the country. All the most important acquisitions of the past two years have already been seen outside London. Many will be touring the UK for another year at least (see page 42).

From the beginning, the collection was intended to benefit not just the people of this country but of the whole world: the great Enlightenment ideal was in every sense universal. Over the past forty years, the growth of international temporary exhibitions (to which the British Museum has been an assiduously generous lender) has produced an unprecedented sharing of the world's cultural patrimony. Never before have so many been able to enjoy and to understand the inheritance of so many others. In the coming years, we hope to be able to lend even more widely – provided the legal systems in place make it possible – so that objects may be seen and understood as parts of different and perhaps contradictory narratives in London, throughout the United Kingdom and across the world.

Neil MacGregor

1. In London

The British Museum houses what is perhaps the supreme collection of human cultures, a conspectus of what mankind has made.

Anniversary highlights

The British Museum's 250th anniversary in 2003 was a focal point for the period in review. The anniversary also provided an opportunity to affirm publicly the Museum's status and to restate its role and principles.

On June 7th, the day of the anniversary, over 21,000 visitors attended festivities held throughout the Museum. Based on a theme of global cultures, there were stories, music and dance from every continent. Readings by Alan Bennett, Vikram Seth, Sandi Toksvig and Konnie Huq took place in the Reading Room. Music was provided by performers as diverse as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Indian dhol drummers and players of the Japanese 'shakuhachi' wooden flute.

The keynote exhibition marking the anniversary was *Museum of the Mind*. This drew on and celebrated the broad scope of the Museum's collection to explore individual and collective memory. In addition, the exhibition *London 1753* created a social and cultural portrait of London at the time of the foundation of the Museum.

The culmination of the year was the opening of two new permanent galleries, the Wellcome Trust Gallery in October and the opening of the restored and adapted King's Library and its permanent exhibition *Enlightenment* (see also pages 20 – 24). These two represent the final parts of the Great Court plan. Access to both is by the Great Court, which encloses the Museum's 'lost' inner courtyard and Reading Room under a huge glass roof. As both spectacle and

The British Museum was the world's first national museum and entry has always been free.

A celebratory birthday bow marked the entrance to the Museum on June 7th 2003, the date of its 250th anniversary.



The Royal Mail issued a special set of stamps to celebrate the anniversary.



environment, it has caught the public imagination, while functionally it has simplified movement around the ground floor and has increased public space by 40 per cent.

The collection

The collection is the very heart of the British Museum's identity and purpose. It comprises 6.5 million objects accumulated over the last 250 years. These objects represent two million years of human history and culture across the world. They range from great works of art and archaeological treasures to prehistoric flint tools and modern protest badges. Whether on display in the main galleries, on loan to other museums or for consultation within the study rooms at the British Museum, the material is publicly available to all who wish to see it.

Acquisitions

The collection continues to grow as understanding of the world changes. The addition of major new objects from past cultures provides fresh opportunities for the Museum to re-interpret their history. In addition, the Museum collects from the modern era to allow visitors to consider different aspects of contemporary life, faith and politics across the world.

The collection is held in trust for the nation, so the British Museum works with other museums in the UK jointly to acquire important objects and to present new acquisitions across the country. The internet is increasingly important in making acquisitions even more widely accessible.

During 2002/04, a number of important additions were made. Of these the most momentous was the Queen of the Night, a 4,000-year-old terracotta relief from Iraq depicting a Babylonian goddess of the underworld. The plaque was acquired by the Museum in 2003 with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Art Collections Fund (Art Fund) and the British Museum Friends after being held in private ownership in England, probably since 1924. It toured a number of cities in Britain during 2004 and it is hoped to send it on temporary loan to The Iraq Museum, Baghdad.

Other notable acquisitions include a statue of the Radiant

The Museum is indebted to the generous help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the British Museum Friends, the Art Fund and many supporters on whom it is entirely dependent for its acquisition of objects for the nation.

Buddha, Sakyamuni, in 2004. Originating in seventh-century North India, the 14-inch, gold-toned figure is one of the rarest and most influential images of the Buddha, and the only one of its kind in any museum in Europe. It was a joint purchase between the Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Museum, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund and the Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund. After three months at the V&A and then at the British Museum, it is being displayed on a nationwide tour.

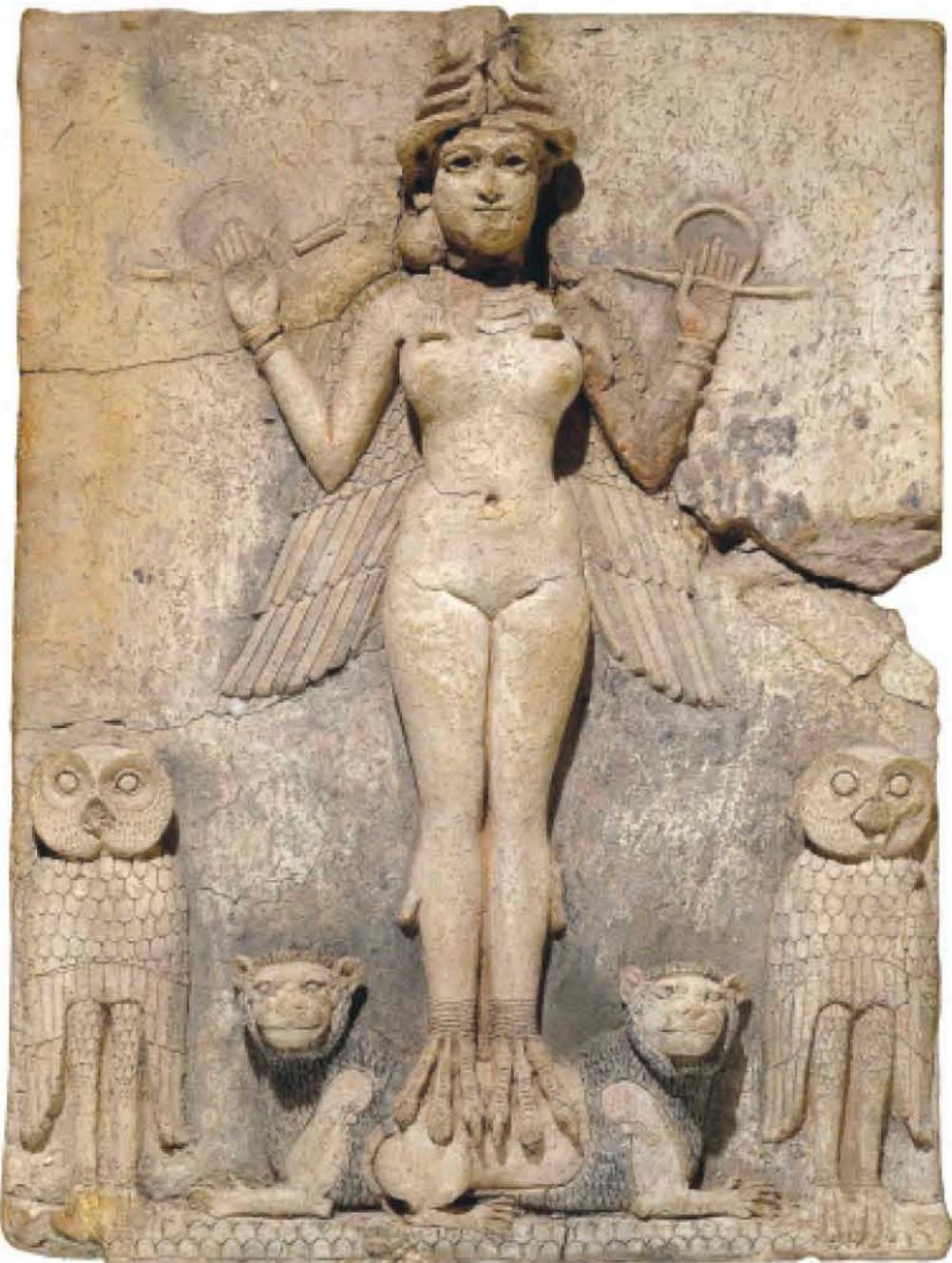
A collection of 67 late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Native North American objects has been purchased from Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, the core of the collection consisting of material brought there by the Irish-American schoolboy Bryan Mullanphy in 1825. Among the remarkable pieces is a unique deerskin map, which probably records negotiations for the sale of land on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers by the Wea people in 1774. The collection was acquired with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, JP Morgan and the L J Scaggs and Mary C Skaggs Fund. It will be on display at the Ulster American Folk Park, the Ulster Museum in Belfast and Fermanagh County Museum during 2004 and 2005.

Other acquisitions include the Ringlemere gold cup and Baldock temple treasure, important recent discoveries of ancient British objects (see also pages 36–39), and the Guilford Puteal (well-head). The latter is a marble monument from Corinth erected to celebrate the victory of Octavian over Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. It was acquired with the help of the Art Fund, The Henry Moore Foundation and The Society of Dilettanti.

The Rogers collection of 1,360 medieval and early modern British coins was jointly purchased with the Ashmolean Museum. This is a large collection of low denomination coins – a type important in daily lives of people, although rarely collected by museums.



A native North American cradle, part of the Stonyhurst Mullanphy Collection, which has been acquired by the Museum.



Gifts and bequests

The Museum continues to benefit from many generous gifts of objects, prints and drawings. Notable among these were 70 etchings, drawings and gouaches by the Australian artist Fred Williams, which were donated by his widow, Mrs Lyn Williams, and shown as part of the exhibition *Three Great Gifts* from December 2003 to May 2004.

Three Great Gifts also showed works acquired with the support of the National Art Collections Fund (Art Fund) since it was founded in 1903. One of these is the British Museum's first drawing by the Belgian surrealist René Magritte, acquired in 2003. It was probably executed in 1936, and given by the artist to the critic Herbert Read. The third part of the exhibition was the collection of modern British work bequeathed in 2002 by David Brown, a former curator at the Tate Gallery.

In 2003, the notable film critic Alexander Walker bequeathed his collection of over 200 modern prints and drawings to the Museum.

The British Museum Friends gave the Museum a rare Roman one-handled stone cup in honour of their former chairman, Nicholas Barber. The cup is carved from a single piece of fluorspar and dates from the first century AD. The purchase was also supported by the Art Fund.

Cataloguing and documenting the massive Wendorf collection of prehistoric stone tools, pot sherds and bones from Egypt and Sudan is underway to ensure that it is properly stored, documented and made accessible for further study. This generous gift by the eminent American archaeologist, Professor Fred Wendorf, is the result of his excavations and research over 40 years.

Conservation and care

That the collection should continue to inspire and inform future generations is central to the ideal that it is held in trust for the nation. So conservation and care are as essential to the Museum as are research, the galleries, exhibitions and learning. To achieve the highest possible standards in storage and care, the Museum has begun a major review to improve



La Géante is the first drawing by René Magritte to be acquired by the Museum, with generous support from the Art Fund and the British Museum Friends

existing facilities for all parts of the collection.

Conservators continue the painstaking process of restoring objects and preventing decay, especially challenging given the enormous range of materials in issue. A good example is the long-term programme to conserve the large library of 120,000 cuneiform tablets in the Museum. These valuable historical documents from Mesopotamia, modern Iraq, include examples of the oldest writing in the world (*circa* 3000 BC). Made from sun baked clay, they are extremely fragile, so new techniques have had to be developed to preserve them for future generations.

The preparation of the new King's Library and Wellcome Trust Gallery at the Museum (see page 20-24) required the examination of hundreds of objects previously in the study collection. Many needed special attention to ensure they could withstand permanent public display. It also gave conservators the opportunity to examine material restored in the past using methods now known to be damaging in the long term.

Study and research

The British Museum lives on research. New research constantly changes understanding of the collection's objects and works of art, and the cultures that made them. The new insights provide the substance and stimulus for engagement with the public, directly affecting the way objects and peoples are presented and interpreted in the permanent galleries, exhibitions, the internet and other media.

The Museum's research falls into three main categories: new research on the existing study collection; archaeological and anthropological fieldwork to discover more about the societies from which objects in the Museum come (see In Britain pages 34 – 38, and In the World pages 51 – 54); and the use of scientific techniques to learn more about objects and their biographies. At the same time, the study collections of the Museum are constantly used as a research resource by university staff, research students and interested members of the public from around the world.

The study collection

Three examples show the range of recent research on material in the study collection. The publication of *Italian Medals c.1530–1600 in British Public Collections* by British Museum Press is a detailed study of Renaissance medals, a valuable source of historical and artistic evidence. This study took years to complete and started with the large collection of medals at the British Museum, but extended to other medals in public museums across the UK. The publication of this research also led to a temporary exhibition on the subject.

Another example is the reconstruction of the lost print collection of Ferdinand Columbus (1488–1539). The son of Christopher Columbus, he acquired 3,200 engravings, woodcuts and maps. Although the collection did not survive, the prints are described in great detail in an inventory that has remained in Seville. The results of the reconstruction project, funded by the J Paul Getty Trust, have transformed understanding of the history of Renaissance printmaking, and are published by British Museum Press.

The Admonitions Scroll painting in the Museum is one of the most important works in the history of Chinese art and is probably a later copy of the artist Gu Kaizhi. None of Gu Kaizhi's original works has survived, but he has still acquired a legendary status, both as a painter and as a writer on Chinese painting. Interdisciplinary research led by the Museum has re-examined this important masterpiece in the light of discoveries and interpretations of Chinese art. This new project has been

A section of the *Admonitions Scroll* from China, sixth to eighth century AD, which is being re-examined using high-resolution digital scanning.



helped by high-resolution digital scanning, which has allowed the scroll to be made available on the internet to scholars and the public, in China and around the world.

Scientific techniques

A number of recent projects show how old objects in the collection hold potential for new discoveries when analysed with new techniques. The famous prehistoric Folkton Drums from Yorkshire, for example, have recently been re-examined to establish exactly of what type of stone they are made. There has been controversy about whether these enigmatic objects were made locally, or came from elsewhere. New analysis shows they are made from local chalk.

The 'virtual mummy' currently on display in the Museum, was created with the computer graphics company SGI. The mummy is of the priest Nesperennub from 22nd Dynasty

(circa 800 BC). It was taken to the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, where a CAT scanner obtained 1500 cross-sectional images running its full length. The resultant image has allowed important discoveries to be made about this person without having to unwrap his mummy. It has also proved a popular new way to present mummies to the public. The facial reconstruction of Nesperennub was done by Caroline Wilkinson of Manchester University, the leading authority in this field.

X-ray techniques have been used in a new investigation of objects from the Royal Cemetery at Ur, southern Iraq. In order to preserve these delicate objects, they were originally 'block lifted', fixed in wax and wrapped in bandages during the mid-1920s. These blocks have remained wrapped until techniques were developed to ensure the preservation of their contents. Now they have been x-rayed to reveal what

Star of the highly successful exhibition Mummy: the Inside Story, this computer image was generated from 1500 CAT scans of the mummy of the priest Nesperennub.





A Bolivian carnival mask, displayed in the new Wellcome Trust Gallery. The Gallery won the Permanent Exhibition Award for Excellence at the Museum & Heritage Show 2004.

they contain – and in one, unexpectedly, a pair of supposed crushed skulls turned out to be two gold, silver and lapis lazuli head-dresses similar to one of the most famous objects from Ur in the Museum.

New displays

The Wellcome Trust Gallery

The Wellcome Trust Gallery, which links the Great Court with the northern wing of the Museum, opened in October 2003. Funded by a grant of £5.4 million from the Wellcome Trust, the Gallery will present a series of long-term exhibitions, not about a particular culture in isolation but prompting reflections on to the Museum's collection as a whole. Like other new galleries and temporary exhibitions, considerable new research was needed, including fieldwork around the world, to bring the gallery's subject matter to life.

Cradle to Grave is a specially commissioned art installation for the new Wellcome Trust Gallery. It shows all the drugs prescribed for a typical modern British man and woman during their lifetimes.



The opening exhibition, *Living and Dying*, explores the different ways in which people around the world seek wellbeing for themselves or their communities in the face of illness, suffering and death. It shows how different cultures used to and continue to seek wellbeing in ways different from those in Western societies. For example, the emphasis may be on the community, relationships with other people, with the landscape, or with animals and the spirit world. Such approaches are contrasted with those of modern Britain through a specially commissioned art installation, *Cradle to Grave*. Made by artists Susie Freeman, David Critchley and Liz Lee, this contains all the drugs prescribed for a typical modern British man and woman during their lifetimes.



HRH The Prince of Wales attended the opening of the King's Library on 11th December 2003.

The King's Library

The King's Library was designed by Sir Robert Smirke and built between 1823 and 1827 in order to house the books of George III. The books were removed to the British Library in 1998, allowing the space to be put to a new use. After three years of restoration work, the Library reopened in December 2003, a fitting finale to the Museum's anniversary year.

The Grade 1 Listed double-height room is the largest neoclassical interior in London. A supreme example of building and design in the Age of Enlightenment, its extraordinary size is owed to the novel use of cast-iron beams to support the ceiling. The restoration of the room's exquisite detail and glorious spaces has been painstaking and authentic. Hidden in the fabric are new air conditioning and lighting controls with 200 kilometres of new wiring. The project received the RIBA Heritage Award 2004 for the best restoration.

The King's Library now houses the permanent exhibition *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the 18th Century*. This explores the intellectual world in which the Museum was founded, while creating a sense of what the original Museum was like by showing material from the collection of the time, including books, rocks, fossils, biological specimens, as well as coins, scientific instruments, antiquities and contemporary material from America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

The gallery also explains the intellectual controversies

Volunteers showing visitors objects in the restored King's Library. Object handling by visitors is run by volunteers and has become very popular throughout the Museum.



The King's Library was generously supported by The Wolfson Foundation, The Hon Simon Sainsbury, The Francis Finlay Foundation, Heritage Lottery Fund, The Pidem Fund, The John Ellerman Foundation, British Museum Friends and others.

that this and similar collections provoked. Many of the objects in the new exhibition come from Sir Hans Sloane's founding bequest or were collected by the Museum early on. They include William Hamilton's Greek vases, and materials brought back from Captain Cook's voyages in the Pacific.

The King's Library now also houses books from the library of the House of Commons. Many discoveries were made in the course of creating the gallery, as curators re-examined objects that had been in the study collections for over 200 years. The background research on the intellectual history of this period has not only fed into the displays, but has been presented to a wider public through television programmes, books, publications and study days.

7000 Years of Chinese Jade

In November 2002, the new permanent display was opened in the Selwyn and Ellie Alleyne Gallery, which bridges the Asiatic galleries with the north-east of the Museum. With over 200 objects made from jade between 5000 BC and the present day, the display gives visitors an understanding of the long history and significance of jade in Chinese culture. Most of the objects have been generously lent from the collection of Sir Joseph E Hotung.

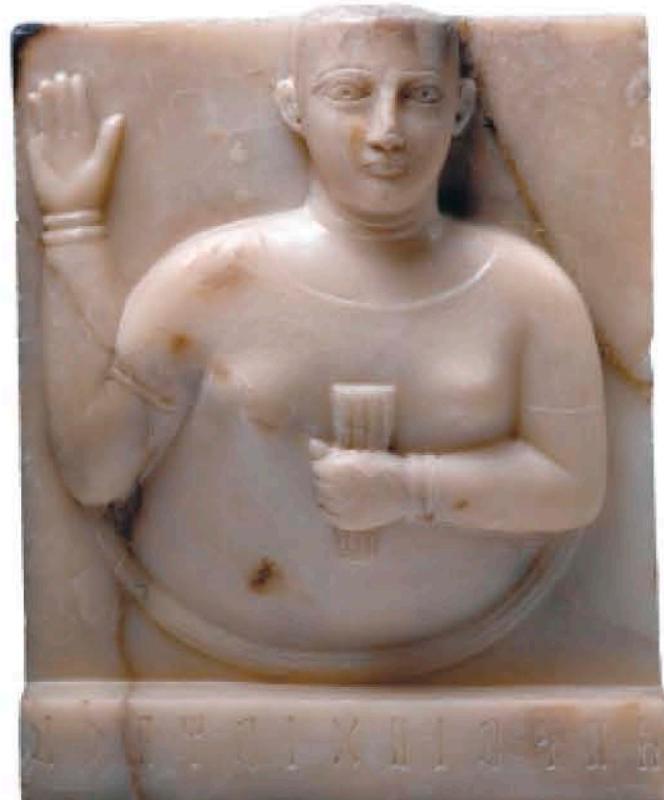
Temporary exhibitions

The British Museum continues its long tradition of staging temporary exhibitions on wide-ranging subjects and themes. These allow it to present new aspects of the world's cultures, stimulate new research and help reinvigorate engagement with the public through the permanent galleries. These are some of the highlights of the major exhibitions mounted during 2002/2004.

Queen of Sheba: Treasures from ancient Yemen

June/October 2002

This exhibition introduced the public to the little known, complex civilisations of pre-Islamic Yemen. Some believe that the Queen of Sheba originally came from this ancient kingdom, although Ethiopia also has a strong claim to her.



A first-century BC alabaster sculpture from southern Arabia, shown in the exhibition Queen of Sheba: Treasures from Ancient Yemen.

Spectacular artefacts from the Museum's own collection, and many on loan from museums across Yemen and the American Foundation for the Study of Man were used to present the civilisations of southern Arabia in the first millennium BC. Sponsorship allowed an open air concert with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to be staged in connection with the exhibition, outside the front of the Museum.

Sponsor: Barclays plc

Antony Gormley: Field for the British Isles

November 2002/January 2003

Antony Gormley's extraordinary *Field for the British Isles*, which comprises 40,000 tiny terracotta figures, came to the British Museum in 2002. Being seen for the first time in the context of a great archaeological institution, the work took



Some of the 40,000 terracotta figures in Field for the British Isles by Antony Gormley.

on a new resonance as part of something 'infinitely more ancient' the universal compulsion to model in clay. *Field for the British Isles* was loaned from the Arts Council Collection and installed by volunteers from British Museum staff, British Museum Friends and the sponsor organisation, Bloomberg. Sponsors: Bloomberg, The Blessing Way Foundation and White Cube.

Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy: The graphic work of a Renaissance artist December 2002/March 2003.
This was the first exhibition in the UK for more than thirty years to be devoted to Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). It examined his extraordinary achievements as a draughtsman and printmaker and his extensive influence on artists and craftsmen over subsequent centuries.

More than 200 works were arranged chronologically documenting the development of his woodcut and engraving techniques, which were to change the history of printmaking. Also covered was the influence of Dürer's art in later periods, from the attention of artists and collectors in the late sixteenth century to his status as a figurehead for German nationalism during the nineteenth century.

The show was based on the superlative Dürer collection held by the British Museum, much of which is part of Sir Hans Sloane's original bequest in 1753, and supplemented by around fifty important loans from other collections including the National Gallery, the Royal Collection, the Ashmolean Museum and star pieces from Berlin and Vienna. Two drawings, *Self-portrait as a thirteen-year old* and the world-famous *Praying Hands*, had never before been displayed in this country. Sponsors: Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, Tavolozza Foundation, Dasha Shenkman and Katrin Bellinger

Kazari: Decorations and Display in Japan 15th – 19th centuries February/April 2003
Kazari is the highly developed art used to arrange decorative objects and govern the principles of their display. The exhibition looked at this art in the context of themes such as the Shogun's Court (15th – 16th centuries), the exuberant style of



The late sixteenth-century copy by
Hans Hoffmann of Dürer's Self-portrait
at the age of thirteen.

a newly victorious Samurai class of the seventeenth century, and the licensed brothel quarter of Edo (Yoshiwara) and Kabuki theatres where courtesans and actors played out tableaux of living *kazari* to attract and entertain.

The exhibition was organised by The Japan Society New York and the British Museum, in association with the Suntory Museum of Art. One of the most ambitious and spectacular Japanese art exhibitions in recent years, it was first presented in New York in 2002 before coming to the British Museum in 2003. *Sponsors:* Fidelity Foundation of Fidelity Investment, Mr Kazuo Orado and others.

Museum of the Mind
April/September 2003

The British Museum's 250th anniversary programme was launched by this special exhibition, which examined how memory shapes cultural identity in many societies.

Delving into the Museum's own incomparable collection, *Museum of the Mind* looked at many different ways in which objects are used to preserve and shape memories. Objects were drawn from many cultures, from the wooden models of wave patterns made by Micronesian seafarers to the Hinton St Mary mosaic from Dorset – possibly the earliest known representation of Christ – funerary artefacts from ancient Egypt and Rome, coffins from Ghana, photography and other forms of everyday memorabilia collected and treasured today. There were also contemporary works by Osi Audu, David Hockney, Jock McFadyen, Susan Hiller and Peter Doig, all recently acquired by the Museum and displayed together for the first time.

A highlight was the specially commissioned 'Day of the Dead' *ofrenda*, or shrine, created by the contemporary Mexican altar-maker Eugenio Reyes Eustaquio. This celebrated the anniversary by focusing on the founder, Sir Hans Sloane, as its 'ancestral' image.

Sponsor: BP



A seventeenth-century Japanese
campaign coat (private collection) from
the exhibition *Kazari*; decorations and
display in Japan.



London 1753
May/November 2003
Also part of the anniversary celebrations, this exhibition presented a social and intellectual portrait of London at the time the British Museum was founded.

Over 300 objects were on display, many representing everyday production and consumption that were the background to life in this city of enormous contrasts which had become the largest in the western world. There were watches and jewellery, silks, coins, medals celebrating military victories as well as ephemera such as a set of spurs for fighting cocks, condoms, shop signs, handbills and admission tickets to famous trials. These were displayed alongside Hogarth prints, watercolours by Paul and Thomas Sandby, drawings by Canaletto and a first edition of Dr Johnson's Dictionary.

John Rocque's vast map showing the extent of the capital was made available by the British Library, while The Foundling Museum loaned a group of tokens left with abandoned babies taken into the Foundling Hospital – pathetic mementoes ranging from a carved hazelnut to a delicate finger ring.
Sponsors: Francis Finlay Foundation; Corporation of London, The Golden Bottle Trust; Jonathan Gestetner.

Medicine Man: The Forgotten Museum of Henry Wellcome

June/November 2003
Henry Wellcome was a great entrepreneur and philanthropist. By his death in 1936, he had amassed an extraordinary collection of over one million objects related to medical history. It is one of the twentieth century's least known but most extraordinary and important museum collections.

Through objects selected from his museum, *Medicine Man* explored different cultural and historical approaches to medicine and health, ranging from the practical to the exotic, featuring magic, philosophy, ritual, dance, costume and cookery.

The exhibition illustrated the astounding scale of the collection as well as the enormous range and ambition of its subject matter. It also featured certain surprises, from relics such as Charles Darwin's cane to items of erotica and practical



Said to be a lock of George III's hair, from the exhibition Medicine Man.

sex equipment. Also shown was a lock of George III's hair, which was analysed to determine whether the King had porphyria.
Sponsor: The Wellcome Trust (the independent research-funding charity, established by Henry Wellcome's will in 1936)

Tibetan Legacy: Paintings from the Hahn Kwang-ho collection

November 2003
The idea of using banner paintings, 'thang-kas', in meditation as an aid to concentrate on one deity or teaching, was brought to Tibet with the earliest of the missionaries from India around 800 – 900 AD. This exhibition enabled visitors to learn a great deal about Buddhism and its development in Tibet, through these distinctive religious objects. It was drawn from the collection of Dr Hahn Kwang-ho, a well-known collector in Korea and enthusiastic supporter of the Korea collections in the British Museum.

Sponsor: Dr Hahn Kwang-ho

Education

The educational activities of the British Museum in London are aimed at all levels, from primary schools to higher and adult education.

Schools

Every year at least 180,000 school children come to the Museum to use the collection in a variety of ways. This figure is just for those school parties who pre-book their visit; many others schools visit unannounced as there is no admission charge. The Museum provides a wide range of support for teachers leading these groups, from sessions with Museum staff through to gallery guides and teachers' notes. The Charities Advisory Trust and the Helen Hamlyn Trust provide ongoing support for this work.

In addition, the Museum has been developing internet resources for schools and children. These allow schools to prepare and follow-up their visits to the Museum and give access to the Museum's collection and expertise to schools unable to travel to Central London.

More than 4.7 million people visited the British Museum in 2003. A quarter of all adult visitors to the Museum bring children with them; 40% of the adult visitors to the British Museum are under 35 years old.

Adult education

The Museum works in partnership with a wide range of Higher Education and adult learning organisations such as the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS), the Open University and The London Institute. The Museum has, for example, established a joint funded lectureship in Museums and Lifelong Learning with Birkbeck College, part of the University of London which specialises in courses designed for part-time students.

In addition, Museum staff participate in a wide range of teaching and support for undergraduate and post-graduate university courses, assist in the supervision of research students and act as university examiners.

Public programme

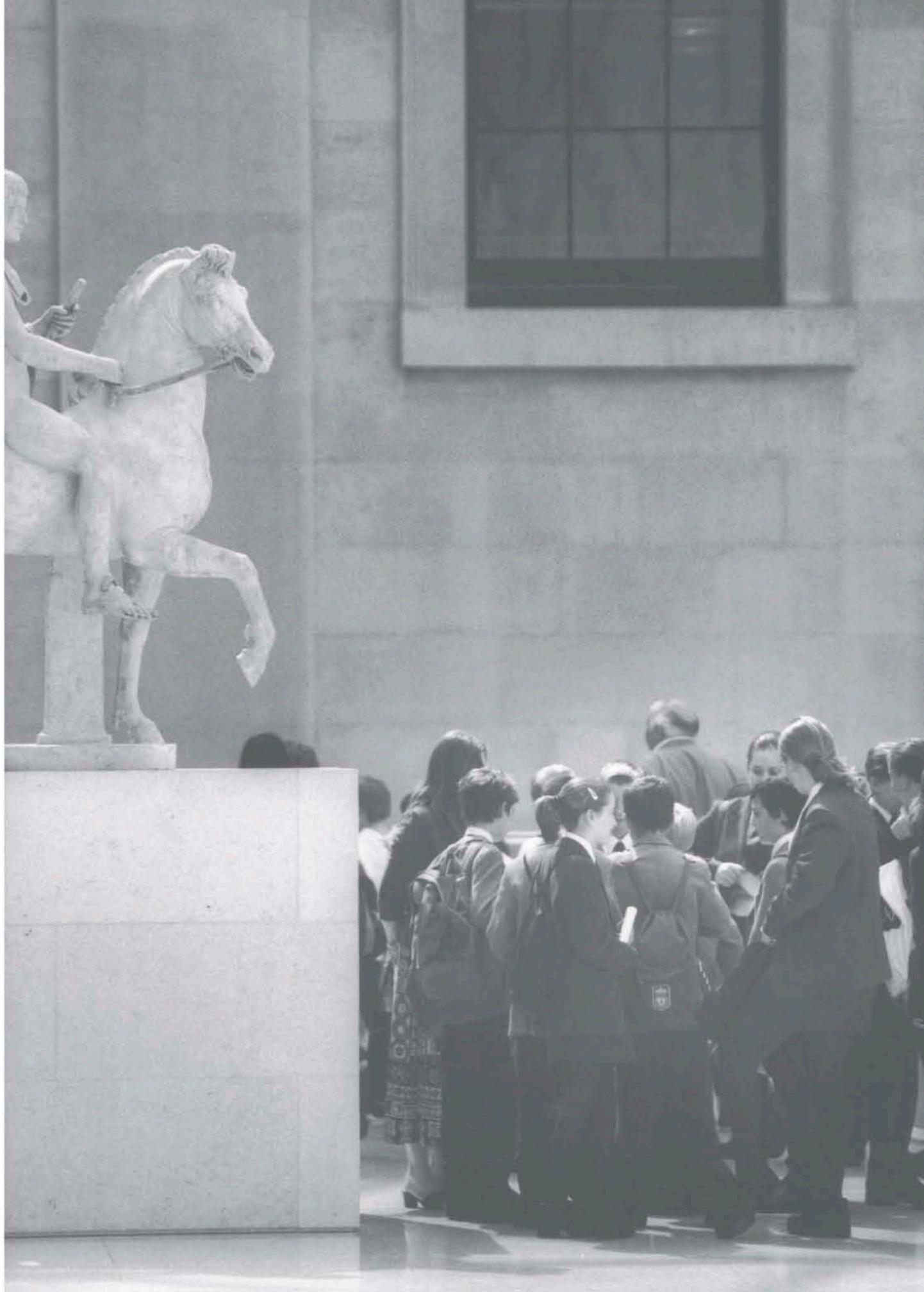
The Museum continues to provide numerous public activities. These range from guided tours, many led by the volunteer guides called 'eyeOpeners', trails and children's activity packs. A special programme of activities, tours, lectures and supporting internet material was created to support the Greek Myths theme of the BBC Proms in 2003. Sleepovers organised by the BMF Young Friends are consistently popular. The Museum also offers lectures, study days, films and debates.

Hands-on experience

Object handling sessions are becoming increasingly popular in the Museum. Around 100,000 visitors a year take part at six gallery locations, including the new King's Library. 'Touching history' in this way gives a new dimension to the way visitors experience the collections. The sessions are led by trained volunteers. The success of the project has prompted several articles in the press, and its organisers are now helping other museums in the UK to establish similar programmes.

There are around 350 volunteers who help the Museum. They perform many roles from working with the public in the 'Hands On' programme to supporting individual departments with registration and care of the collection.

Learning in the Great Court.



2. In Britain

The British Museum belongs to everyone in the country. Support for British archaeology, research, partnerships with other museums loan programmes and broadcasting are helping to bring the collection to the wider audience.

Archaeology and research

The Museum has always played a leading role in discovering more about Britain's past. Archaeological excavations are an essential part of this activity, acting as a generator of new material and new ideas.

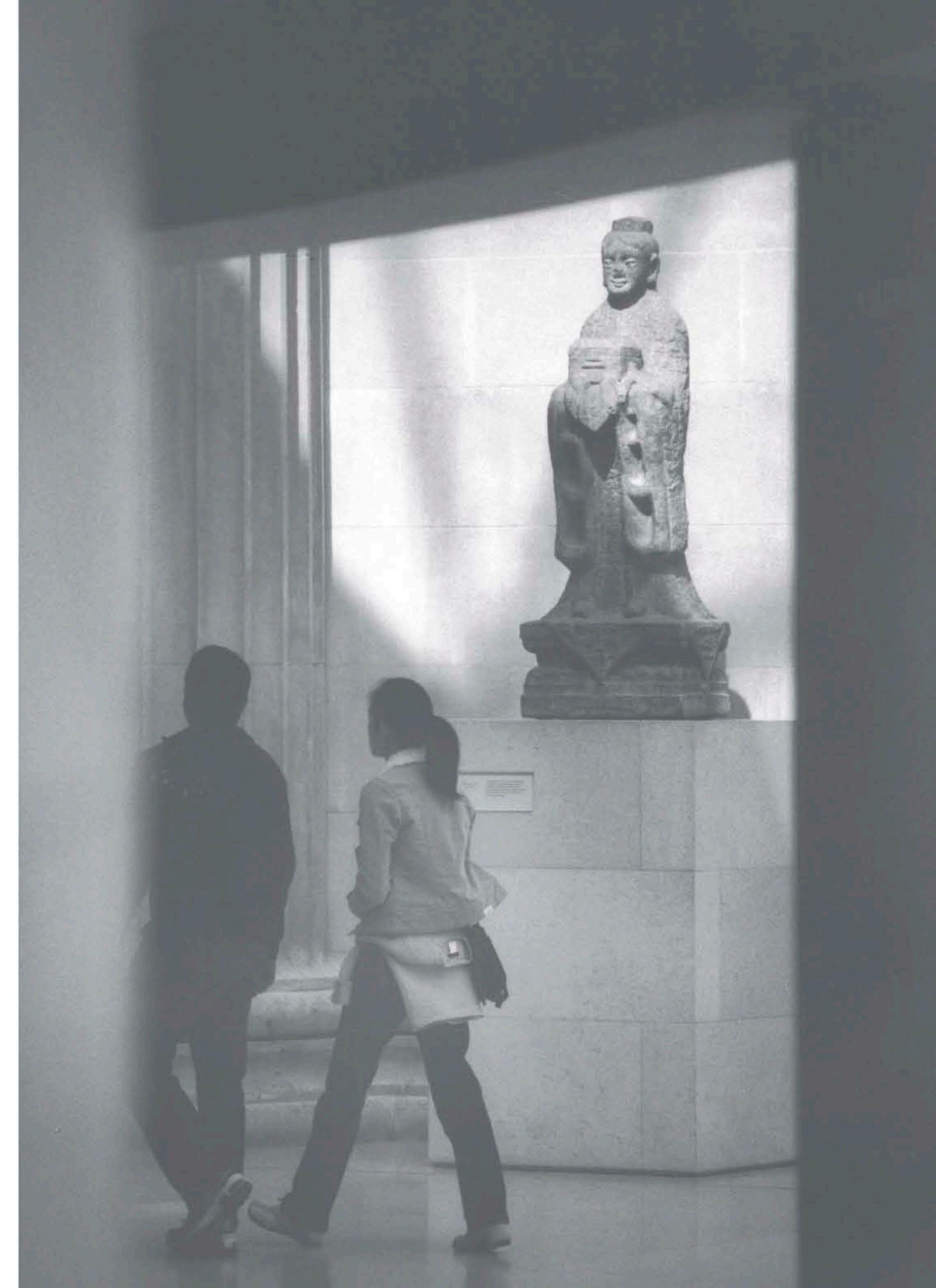
An important emphasis of this work is on the earliest human inhabitants of the British Isles. For example, recent excavations in north Norfolk have investigated the spot where Mike Chambers discovered a flint axe that is possibly the oldest flint tool ever found in Britain (see page 37). It was given pride of place in the exhibition *Buried Treasure: Finding our Past* (see page 37 and 42), and the continuing excavations are aiming to provide an accurate date for it.

This study is part of 'Ancient Human Occupation of Britain', the largest archaeological project ever funded by the Leverhulme Foundation, which the British Museum is conducting with the Natural History Museum and several UK universities. The aim is to learn more about the first people who lived in Britain from half a million years ago onwards.

Treasure and Portable Antiquities

Under English Law, the Museum has a statutory responsibility to record and report on discoveries of Treasure (essentially, gold and silver objects more than 300 years old). More curators, scientists and conservators work on Treasure than any other single activity in the Museum. In 2002/03, 422

A Chinese stone guardian in the Great Court.



cases were processed; for 2003/04 the figure rose to 530. The great majority of discoveries are not acquired by the Museum but by local museums across England, or are returned to the finders.

In conjunction with Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA), the British Museum runs the Portable Antiquities Scheme, a voluntary scheme for the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public across the whole of England and Wales. The Scheme has led to a huge increase in the amount of ancient finds reported; from 14,000 in 1997/8 to 49,500 in 2002/3.

Conservators in the Museum are involved in cleaning and conserving material from Treasure cases. This has included the careful excavation of a unique Roman silver decorated helmet contained in a block of soil excavated at a site in Leicestershire. In another case, 5,000 common Roman coins which were fused together in a pot had to be painstakingly separated by British Museum conservators. This cleaning showed that one of coins was minted by Domitianus, a hitherto unknown Roman Emperor. Both these important discoveries are to be acquired by local museums.

Major discoveries of Treasure and Portable Antiquities often require excavation and fieldwork to reveal more about their contexts. The Museum has helped fund a number of such investigations, including those of two important Treasure finds which were acquired by the Museum: the Ringlemere gold cup and the Senua figurine.

Ringlemere gold cup

This remarkable cup was discovered at Ringlemere, East Kent in November 2001 by Cliff Bradshaw. It dates from around 1700 to 1500 BC, the Early Bronze Age, and is only the second example of its type to come from Britain. There are only five similar cups known from the whole of Europe.

The cup was scientifically examined by the British Museum using an endoscope and x-rays which allowed it to be 'virtually reconstructed'. The sophistication of the gold-working reveals a high level of skill, more widespread at the time than was previously thought.

Show in the exhibition Buried Treasure: Finding our Past, a flint hand-axe from North Norfolk, which is at least 550,000 years old and possibly the oldest man-made object from Northern Europe.





A computer reconstruction reveals the original appearance of the Ringlemere gold cup.

Since the discovery, archaeologists working with the British Museum under the Canterbury Archaeological Trust have excavated at the findspot. They have found a previously unsuspected funerary complex of the Early Bronze Age. Two contemporary amber ornaments have been donated to the British Museum by the landowners. More recent excavations have revealed evidence for activity on the site, some centuries before the cup was buried.

New goddess for Roman Britain

A major find of Roman temple treasure near Baldock in Hertfordshire was made by a metal detectorist in September 2002. The Hoard has 26 gold and silver objects, including a silver figurine and votive plaques, dating from the later third or fourth century AD.

One of the key pieces is the silver figurine of a goddess, which is almost 15 centimetres high. The delicate objects, especially the silver plaques are receiving ongoing conservation in the Museum. It is only because of the conservation and scientific examination of the objects by Museum staff that the inscriptions on the objects are readable. These show that this goddess – Senua – is a completely new deity for Roman Britain and, indeed, the Roman Empire.

The Ringlemere gold cup and the Senua figurine were both part of the major exhibition *Buried Treasure: Finding our Past* (see page 42).

Museum collaborations

Working with museums across the UK has been given a higher priority than in previous years. A new framework has been established to guide the development of the British Museum's relationships within the UK, building on existing collaborations with museums, universities and other bodies and the long-standing commitment to making loans, touring exhibitions and sharing skills.

The cup was acquired for the national collection with the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, and the British Museum Friends.

The Ringlemere gold cup from around 1700–1500 BC was one of the most notable acquisitions of British objects made by the Museum in 2003/2004.



Organisations in partnership with the British Museum
Belfast, Ulster Museum (Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland), Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Cardiff, National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Exeter City Museums and Art Gallery, Glasgow Museums, Hampshire Museums County Service, Horniman Museum, Leicester City Museums Service, Manchester Museum, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, Tyne and Wear Museums, York Museums Trust

Partnership UK

Partnership UK involves the British Museum with museums covering Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the regions of England. These act as a conduit to the British Museum's role in the cultural life of the regions, and the development of links with education at all levels throughout the UK. The British Museum in turn provides its partners with access to its London and international cultural and scholarly activity. It is the largest and most wide-ranging of any partnership scheme between a national museum and other collections around the country.

Through Partnership UK, new acquisitions and star items from all parts of the Museum's collection will travel with frequency and flexibility to communities throughout the country. An important element is the sharing of skills and expertise between institutions of all sizes and from all parts of the country. To this end, a programme of staff secondments to and from the British Museum is being established.

Ten of the thirteen principal members of the partnership either lead or sit within the regional 'hubs' formed as part of the reorganisation of museums in England called Renaissance in the Regions, which is administered by Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA).

Manchester Museum

A notable example of the new spirit of partnership has been the recent collaboration between the British Museum and the Manchester Museum on the development of the Manchester Money Gallery, which opened in 2003, and 'The Story of Money', an education programme for the Manchester Money Gallery. It was funded by £115,000 from the DCMS and the DfES as part of the Strategic Commissioning scheme.

Imperial sculptures in the Wolfson Gallery of Rome: City and Empire.



Tours and loans

The Museum's determination to make the collection as accessible and visible as possible is being achieved by its intensified programme of tours and loans, affirming that it is a museum for the whole country. By touring museums of local, national and international significance, the research and public engagement of a special exhibition in London with attendant expertise may be brought to many different audiences on both a short-and long-term basis.

Touring exhibitions

Buried Treasure: Finding our Past is a major exhibition on many of the most important recent discoveries of ancient objects from England and Wales. Sponsored by Anglo-American, the exhibition was shown at the British Museum between November 2003 and March 2004. It is now on a two-year tour to Cardiff, Manchester, Newcastle and Norwich, with sponsorship from Tarmac.

This is a collaborative venture with four museums: the National Museum of Wales (Cardiff), the Manchester Museum, Tyne and Wear Museum Service and the Norwich Castle Museum. Most of the objects on show were found by members of the public and often acquired through the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Art Fund or other charitable funds. The exhibition has been well received and is drawing attention to the Portable Antiquities Scheme and Treasure Act, while highlighting the extent of the work of the British Museum with its regional partners.

Buried Treasure: Finding our Past is the first such collaborative exhibition venture between the British Museum and its regional partners. All of the museums concerned have benefited from each others' ideas and expertise at every stage, particularly in marketing, education and volunteer training for hands-on sessions.

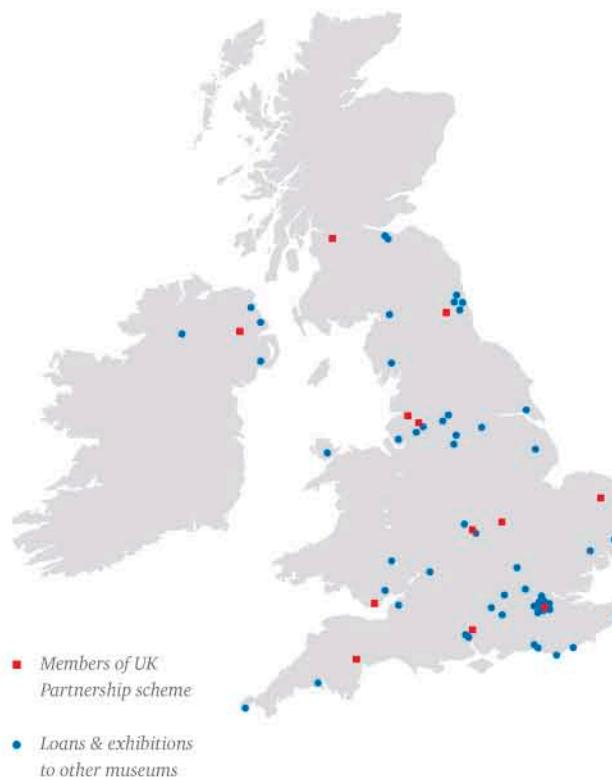
Loan programmes

There was a total of 127 long- and short-term loans made by the British Museum to institutions in the UK during 2002/03, and 102 during 2003/04. Some loans consist of a number of individual objects.

During 2003/04 the British Museum supported institutions across the UK with 229 loans of material from the collection.

Emblematic of the British Museum's commitment to being a museum for the nation has been the tour of the Queen of the Night, the 4,000-year-old terracotta relief of a Babylonian goddess of the underworld (see also Acquisitions page 12 and 14). Support from the Dorset Foundation has enabled this masterpiece from ancient Mesopotamia to travel with a retinue comprising the Director and specialist curators for a series of weekend breaks to the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, New Walk Museum & Gallery in Leicester and the Horniman Museum in south London. Longer periods of loan will follow to the National Museum and Gallery of Wales in Cardiff and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

Visitors have the opportunity to see this extraordinary work of art, to listen to talks by experts, along with storytelling from Mesopotamian legends and participate in workshops





This rare iron Anglo-Saxon helmet with face mask is from the Sutton Hoo ship-burial site in Suffolk.

such as 'Write at the beginning' on cuneiform script and the origins of writing. At the Burrell almost 10,000 people passed through the museum over the weekend, while in Sunderland the attendance figures doubled.

Loans allow objects to be seen in the context of the area they originally came from, such as the loan of the Winchester Treasure to Winchester in 2002/3. The series of loans to the National Trust's Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre has continued over 2002 and 2003, which allows different parts of the world-famous Anglo-Saxon material from Sutton Hoo to be regularly seen in the context of the Early Medieval European collections both at the Museum in London and at the place they were discovered.

Increasingly, parts of the collection are being lent to provide material that can improve and widen new gallery displays by other Museums, enabling them to make more effective use of their own permanent collections in communicating to their visitors. British Museum loans are helping other museums that do not have such extensive collections to create new thematic galleries. The creation of the Money Gallery at the Manchester Museum in 2003 is one example, and there are plans to loan Egyptian material to

Glasgow to strengthen their Egyptian displays, enabling visitors to see some of the British Museum collection of Ancient Egyptian material without visiting London.

Loans from the British Museum are also used by UK museums and galleries to create temporary and travelling exhibitions. Many objects were loaned to the Hayward Gallery in 2003 to celebrate the centenary of the Art Collection Fund. A series of loans has also been made to exhibitions created by the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. One of these, *Changing Face: Masks from the British Museum*, has also toured venues around Britain.

Television and film

Television gives important opportunities for the British Museum to be shared across the nation, presenting its collection and expertise to a very wide audience. Between 2002 and 2004, the Museum enjoyed substantial coverage on a number of UK television programmes.

In the BBC's *Our top ten treasures*, Adam Hart-Davies asked Museum staff to choose what they consider to be the most important British 'treasures' in the Museum and argue why. This programme was seen at New Year 2003 by over three million people and prompted many to visit the Museum in person or via the website.

BBC2's *Hidden Treasures* followed the progress of new discoveries of important treasures in England. The programme was closely linked with the Museum's role in Treasure, the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the major touring exhibition *Buried Treasure* (see page 42). The Museum developed a partnership with BBC's Blue Peter through its competition to design a poster for the 250th Anniversary. Andrew Marr interviewed the Director at length about the Museum and its purpose for BBC4, while BBC Radio 4's *Front Row* also devoted a special programme to interviewing the Director in the New Year of 2003.

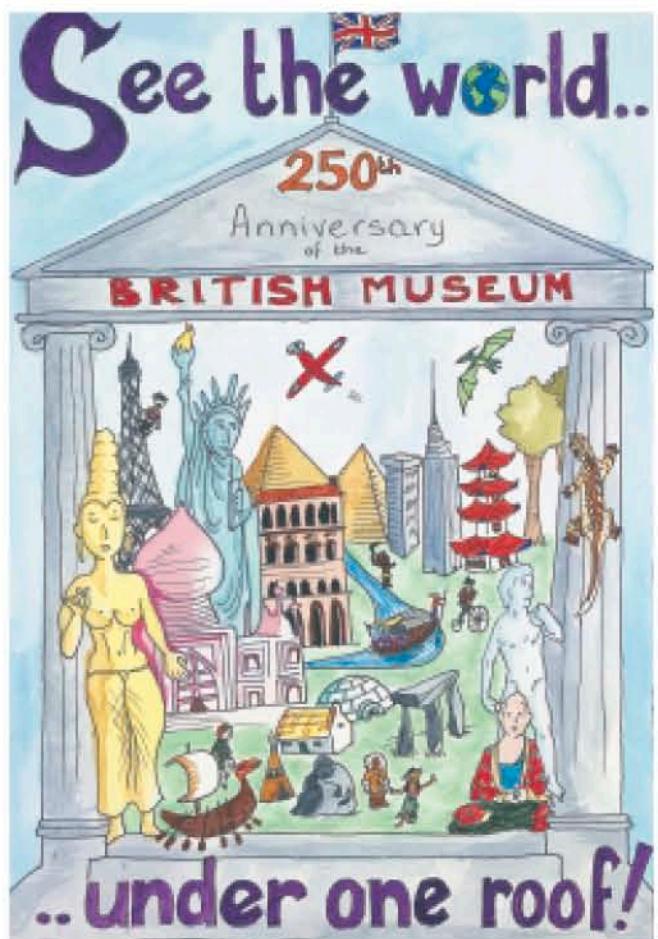
Contributions have been made to many programmes about Iraq and its cultures – especially the Epic of Gilgamesh. Recently the Museum has worked with Windfall Films on a

The most popular object in the Museum is the Rosetta stone. The public voted the Sutton Hoo burial material in the Museum as their Top British Treasure in 2003.

documentary of the exhibition *Mummy: the Inside Story*. The Lion Films programme *Britain's Finest Treasures* for Channel Five also drew on the collection. The Museum also worked with BBC2 on a major programme about the history and debate over the Parthenon Sculptures.

Other noteworthy projects included programmes on Cleopatra, the Queen of Sheba, Gladiators and Hogarth, Wedgwood, Hokusai and Michelangelo as well as several on the subjects of Troy and Alexander the Great.

Between 2002 and 2004, the British Museum was the sole or major contributor to over 150 documentaries in all, as well as a number of architectural and commercial films.



School children are able to have a close-up look at animal mummies from Egypt.



Emily Donegan, aged 12, created the winning entry for the poster competition, which was held by BBC's Blue Peter and the British Museum as part of the anniversary celebrations in June 2003.

3. In the World

The British Museum was set up at arms length from government political control. It aims to be an expert but neutral agent for cultural understanding around the world.

Post-war Iraq

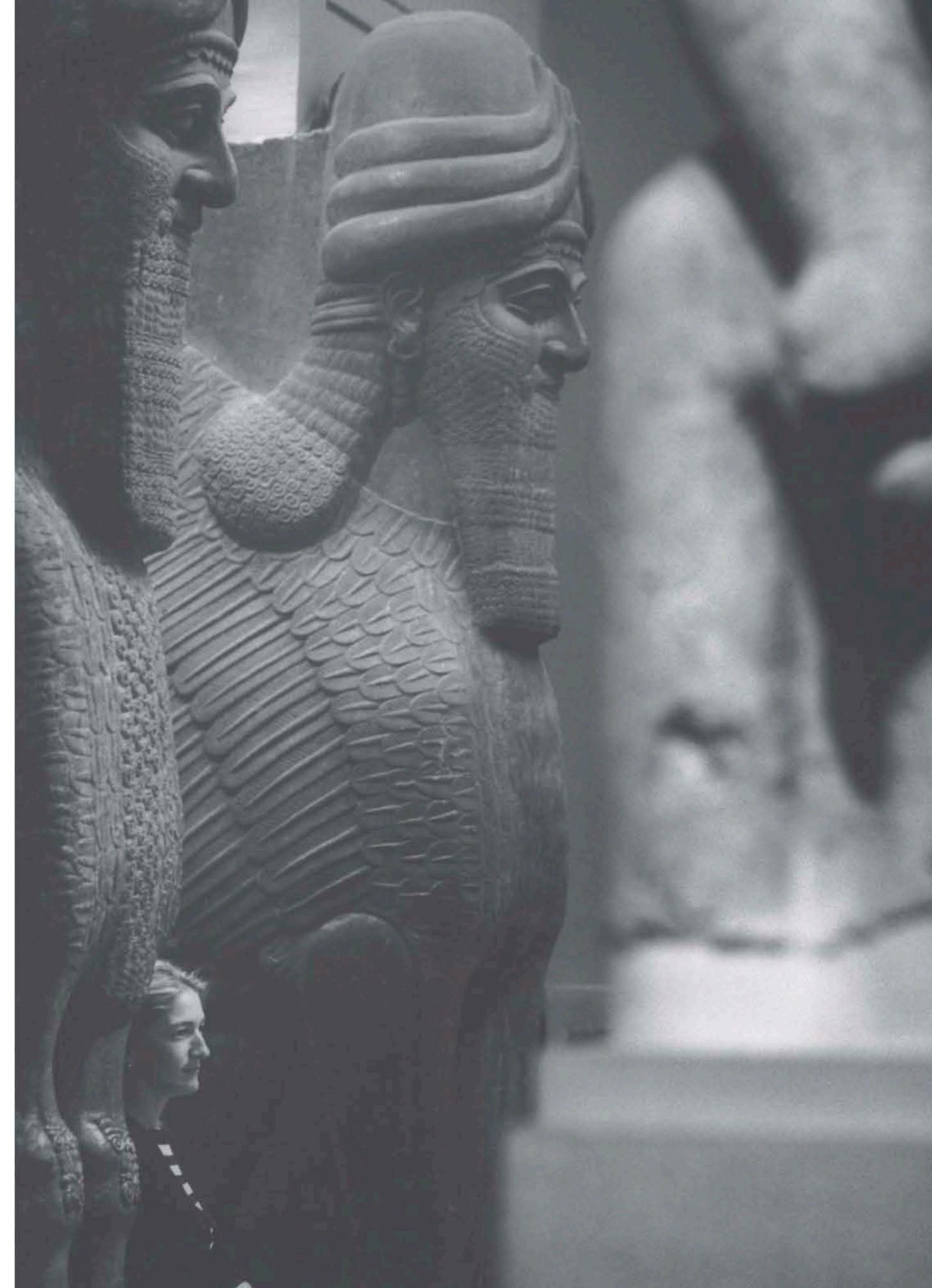
The British Museum's responsibilities in the global context have been acutely demonstrated by the initiative it has been able to take in mobilising international support for the protection of the heritage of Iraq, ancient Mesopotamia.

In April 2003 The Iraq Museum, Baghdad, was looted and a number of important objects were taken. The safety of Iraq's numerous archaeological sites was also uncertain. Under the auspices of UNESCO, the Museum is part of the international effort helping with the losses and damage that have been caused by the conflict.

The British Museum has the greatest collection of Mesopotamian antiquities outside Iraq. It has long-standing relationships with Iraq's archaeologists and museum curators, and was in a unique position to bring expertise and resources to support the Iraq Department of Antiquities in preserving the cultural heritage of Mesopotamia. On 29th April 2003, the British Museum hosted an International Conference in conjunction with UNESCO to discuss the organisation of assistance for the Iraqi Department of Antiquities.

Dr Donny George of the Iraq Museum travelled to London to report on the situation in Iraq to an audience which represented all the major world centres of expertise in Mesopotamian antiquities. It was agreed that the cultural reconstruction of Iraq should be led by the Iraq Department of Antiquities, drawing on the expertise and support of museum curators and university lecturers around the globe, and that

The British Museum has the greatest collection of Mesopotamian antiquities outside Iraq, including these winged human-headed bulls from the palaces of the Assyrian kings.





Iraqi conservators from The Iraq Museum, Baghdad, have been studying new conservation techniques in London.

the British Museum should act as a clearing-house for offers of foreign assistance.

After a visit by the Director of the British Museum to Iraq in May 2003, an Arabic-speaking curator, Sarah Collins, from the Department of the Ancient Near East, began work with The Iraq Museum and the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), set up to supervise the reconstruction of post-war Iraq. One of the first successes on the long road to restoration of The Iraq Museum was its opening of the Assyrian gallery to the public for a limited time. For this, the British Museum helped prepare for display a part of the gold treasure excavated from the tombs of the Assyrian queens at Nimrud.

A team of curators and conservators led by John Curtis from the British Museum also undertook a detailed assessment of curatorial and conservation needs for The Iraq Museum. As a result, a team of Iraqi conservators visited London for several months to learn techniques they had not had access to before the war, to equip them for what will be a very long process of conservation and reconstruction. The Museum's work in post-war Iraq has been supported by the Packard Humanities Institute. At the time of writing the security situation severely limits what the Museum can do in Iraq itself.

Fieldwork and research

Staff from the British Museum are involved with research in every continent except Antarctica. These projects range from archaeological excavations, studies of contemporary culture and work on collections of objects held by other museums. They are usually undertaken in collaboration with colleagues from other institutions, both within the host country and across the globe. The scope and variety of this work is indicated by a number of examples from different countries.

The ancient world

The British Museum initiated the Ashurbanipal Library Project to assist Iraqi colleagues and students in studying cuneiform texts, particularly those from the famous Royal Library of the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (*circa* 650 BC),

found at Nineveh near Mosul (see page 53). The clay tablets were discovered in the mid-nineteenth century and are now in the British Museum. Around 3,700 texts written in Babylonian have been studied, catalogued and replicated to make them available to scholars and students in Iraq. This is a collaborative project between the Museum and the University of Mosul, Iraq, supported by the Townley Group of the British Museum Friends.

In Teheran the Museum is working with Iranian scholars in a new study of the coins of the Sassanians, the rulers of the Persian empire that rivalled Rome and Byzantium before the Islamic Conquest.

At Cnidus on the southern Turkish coast, the Museum is involved with the re-excavation of the Sanctuary of Muses dating from 300 BC. This is where objects in the collection, including the massive sculpture of a lion in the Great Court, were excavated in the nineteenth century. The fieldwork is allowing a better understanding of the material in the Museum and thus the history of this important ancient city. The project is funded by the Townley Group and the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, and is conducted in partnership with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Selçuk University, Konya.

Other excavation projects in the region include the Bronze and Iron Age site in Jordan at Tell es-Saidiyeh (the Biblical 'Zarathan'), the old Phoenician harbour of Sidon in Lebanon and the Byzantine monastery of Deir Ain Abata, also in Jordan.

Between 1833 and 1838, Charles Masson became the first to explore and record the ancient sites in the region of Kabul and Jalalabad in Afghanistan. The value of his work, however, was long disregarded, largely due to his reputation as an unconventional character and his criticisms of the East India Company policies at the time. The Masson Project is a comprehensive study of his manuscripts and collection of finds, which show how important his discoveries were.

Between September 2002 and January 2003, an exhibition in London, *Ancient Afghanistan, the Masson Collection*, marked the culmination of the Project by

The Museum has a collection of over six million objects from almost every part of the world and every period of human history.

Some objects in the Museum are two million years old, among the oldest artefacts in the world.

Locations of some of the Museum's excavations and research projects in the ancient world.

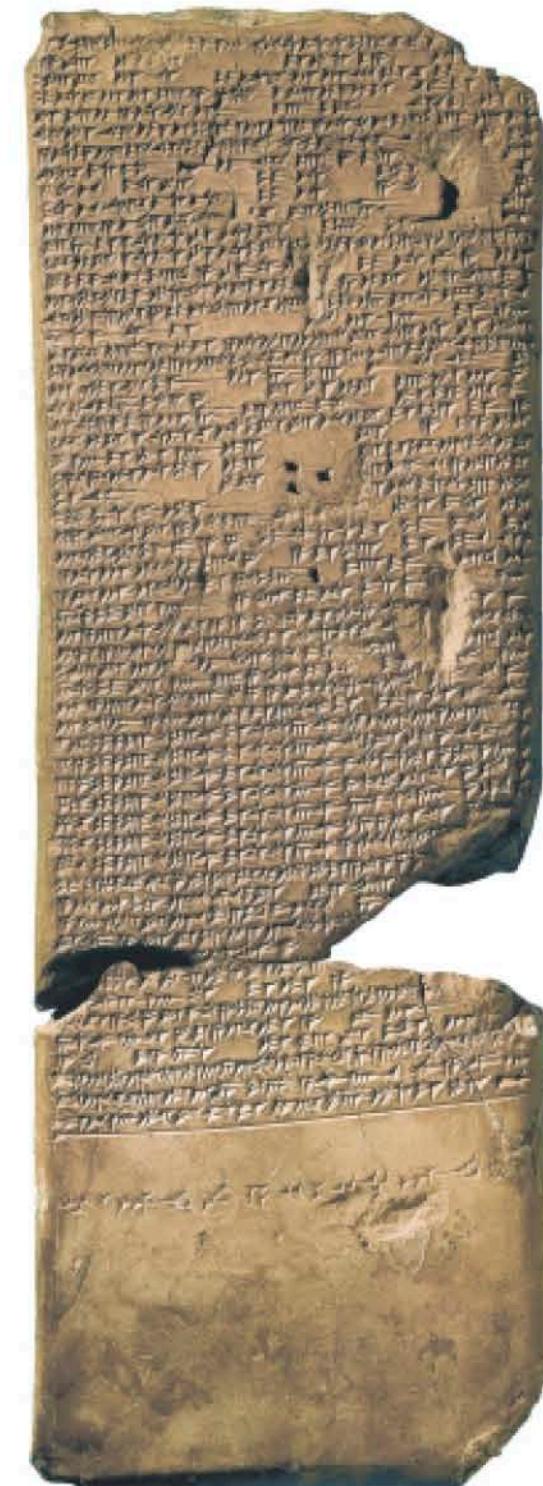


reconstructing the archaeological record of some of the sites. Many of these were from Begram, the 'Alexandria of Caucasus', which now lies buried beneath Baghram military air base, much in the news during the recent conflict.

The British Museum has a long history of work in Egypt. At Kom Firin in the Western Nile Delta, current fieldwork is exploring a site in a part of Egypt whose archaeology is poorly known because of the limits imposed by the height of the water table. Flinders Petrie worked on site in 1886 on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund, and the current fieldwork is throwing new light on objects that were acquired for the British Museum during his visit. This work is generously funded through the Townley Group, British Museum Friends and several private donors.

The archaeology and early history of Sudan has received much less attention than that of its northern neighbour Egypt. The British Museum has been involved for many years with archaeological surveys and excavations in northern Sudan. Recent excavations have taken place at the ancient city of Kawa, an important centre from the fourteenth century BC to the fourth century AD, although surveys in the surrounding area have found over 450 earlier sites.

Following an appeal from the Sudanese National Corporation for Antiquities & Museums, the Museum has been conducting excavations in advance of the construction



An Assyrian cuneiform tablet from the seventh century BC excavated in the nineteenth century from the library of King Ashurbanipal at Nineveh in Iraq.

of the Merowe Dam at the Nile River's fourth cataract. Part of an international rescue effort, the project covers a forty-kilometre area between Dar el-Arab and Kerbikan. The activities have thrown more light on the archaeological potential of the region, and resulted in the recording of hundreds of sites. The Museum is also staging the first ever international exhibition about the history and cultures of the Sudan in 2004.

Further afield

Collaboration with artists and curators on the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa has also improved the British Museum's East African collections, and resulted in a new exhibition of 'Kanga', brightly coloured rectangles of pure cotton cloth, printed in bold designs that are typical for the East Africa and the Indian Ocean region. A colloquium at the Horniman Museum on East African Visual Traditions has also developed from this project.

In collaboration with Goldsmiths and University College, London, a project funded by the ESRC entitled 'Clothing the Pacific: a study of the nature of innovation' has involved fieldwork in the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu resulting in the research and collection of island dresses, several books, a conference and a workshop. In Arunachal Pradesh, far northeast of India, 'Tribal Transitions' is another major collaborative research project with colleagues from the School of Oriental and African Studies, Arunachal University and NGOs. The five year documentary is funded through the ESRC, Goldsmiths Company Charities and UCL.

Isla Isabel (Elizabeth Island) in the Magellan Straits is the subject of a long-term collaborative project involving the British Museum and institutions from Chile and Argentina. The goal is to link the island's early occupation with the period of history first recorded by Europeans. Forty sites have been located so far, including those visited by naturalists on HMS *Challenger* in 1870. The fieldwork is being complemented by archival research and the study of collections, including those held by the British Museum.

Exhibitions and loans

Touring exhibitions and loans during 2002/2004 have enabled several million people to have access to the collection of the British Museum in their own countries. Two touring exhibitions entirely drawn from the British Museum collection have been seen by record audiences. *Treasures from the World's Cultures – The British Museum after 250 Years* has been touring in Japan since October 2003, supported by Asahi Shimbun. The exhibition celebrates the 250th anniversary, demonstrating the breadth of the British Museum collection. It showcases around 270 artefacts from the world's great cultures, including drawings by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Michelangelo, the Queen's Lyre excavated at Ur in southern Iraq, a colourful coffin lid of the 'Unlucky Mummy' found at Thebes in Egypt and many others. This exhibition has now been seen by over 1.3 million people in Japan.

Eternal Egypt has been on tour in the USA and Canada since March 2001. It will have visited eleven cities before the tour ends in 2005 and has already seen by almost 1.5 million visitors. It covers the development and achievements of ancient Egyptian art from the pre-Dynastic to the Roman Period (circa 3100 BC to AD 170) and includes major sculptures, such as the head of Amenhotep III.

Another important exhibition drawn from the collection is *Mightier than the Sword*, supported by the Al-Tajir Trust. This exhibition of Arabic script, its beauty and meaning, was shown in Melbourne in 2003 and is now in the Islamic Arts Museum in Kuala Lumpur. A very different exhibition is the *Masterpieces of Printmaking* exhibition on tour in Spain through La Caixa.

Apart from specific exhibitions, continuing loan programmes meet worldwide interest in the great variety of objects that the British Museum cares for. Frequently designed in partnership with local communities, these programmes enable people outside Britain to engage with specific objects and contribute to their interpretation. A total of 76 loans, often consisting of a number of individual objects, were made to overseas institutions in 2002/03, and 115 in 2003/04.

At least 2 million people visited international touring exhibitions organised by the Museum during 2003.

International programmes

In addition to research, fieldwork and loans, the British Museum has a long history of working with and supporting museums and other cultural institutions across the world.



The Rt Hon Tony Blair, Prime Minister, in the new Wellcome Trust Gallery, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary reception on the 15th December 2003.

Examples of this work include providing or sharing expertise and other opportunities for staff from other institutions to learn new skills through work placements in the Museum. This important aspect of the Museum's role is being enhanced through the development of special Programmes for Africa, China, Middle East and Sudan.

On his visit to the Museum in December 2003, the Prime Minister announced that the Museum's Africa Programme was to be awarded £0.5 million by DCMS matched by £0.5 million from the British Council.

The internet

The Museum has continued to develop its internet resources to enable as many people as possible around the world to have access to the Museum's collection and expertise. On the Museum's website, COMPASS now provides high-quality images and information about 5,000 objects from the collection, with around twelve million pages downloaded by people across the world in 2003 (compared to eight million in 2002).

COMPASS and Children's COMPASS have been increasingly used to provide on-line tours, including virtual versions of and further information for the Museum's temporary exhibitions and new galleries. In 2003, the tours which supported the

London 1753 exhibition, the Enlightenment Gallery and the exhibition *Buried Treasure* proved very popular. For *Buried Treasure*, the Museum also produced its first bilingual collection information on the internet in English and Welsh.

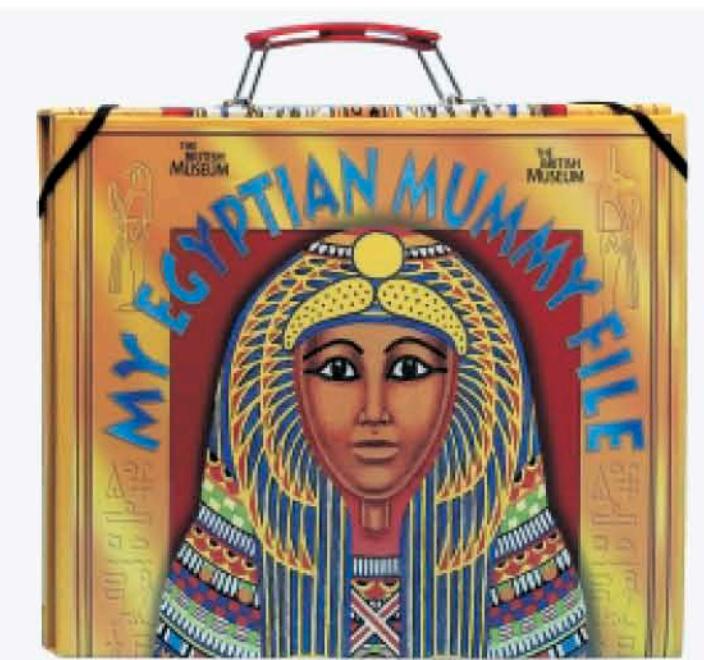
Of particular importance are the Ancient Civilizations websites, sponsored by NTT East Corp, Japan. These self-contained resources are aimed at primary and secondary schools and cover a variety of different curriculum areas. Each provides a wide range of information for children and supporting information for teachers. So far, seven sites have been produced, covering Ancient Egypt, Ancient Mesopotamia, Ancient India and Ancient China, Early Imperial China, Mughal India. The latest site, Ancient Civilizations, ties the rest of the series together by looking at world themes such as religion and trade. The Ancient Egypt website had around 58 million pages accessed in 2003. A further site, on Ancient Greece, is currently in development.

During the Iraq crisis, many people visited the Ancient Mesopotamia site; many were probably adults eager to discover more about the past of Iraq. Other internet activities in 2002 and 2003 included the continued project to digitise the Stein collection from Central Asia, and Museum staff were part of the team that produced the award-winning 'Virtually the Ice Age' website for the Creswell Crags Visitor Centre in Nottinghamshire.

Considerable progress has been made on the new World Timelines website, which is due for completion in early 2005. This project, funded by the Government's Capital Modernisation Fund, is a partnership between the British Museum, Norwich Castle Museum, Chester Museum, Exeter Museum and the Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre. This is a complex undertaking and the British Museum is leading the project. Eight more regional museums are lined up to contribute during 2005.

Publishing

British Museum Press publishes books to interpret the British Museum collections for visitors to the Museum, and for general readers, students, academics and children. They are also available worldwide, many through co-editions. Between



Worldwide sales of 25,000 have been achieved by My Egyptian Mummy File.

April 2002 and April 2004, the Press published over 100 titles in its core areas of history, ancient history, fine and decorative art, and archaeology.

The exhibition catalogue for *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy*, edited by Giulia Bartrum, won the prestigious Art Newspaper/AXA Art catalogue award in 2003. The judges commented: 'It was chosen because it is a superb presentation of current Dürer scholarship, very well edited, with a consistent level of writing.'

Treasure: Finding our Past by Richard Hobbs had excellent sales across the country, largely due to its popular subject matter, linked as it was to the touring *Buried Treasure* exhibition and BBC2's *Hidden Treasure*. The best sales of 25,000 worldwide were achieved by a children's title, the innovative *My Egyptian Mummy File*. Fun and educationally sound, the 'file' contains a book and many things to make and do.

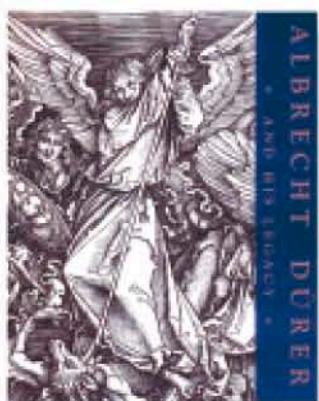
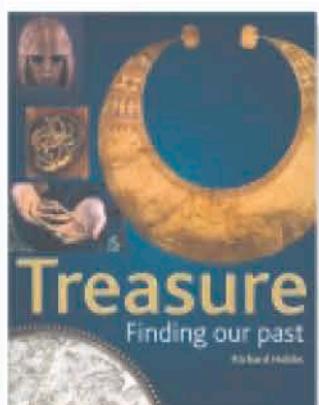
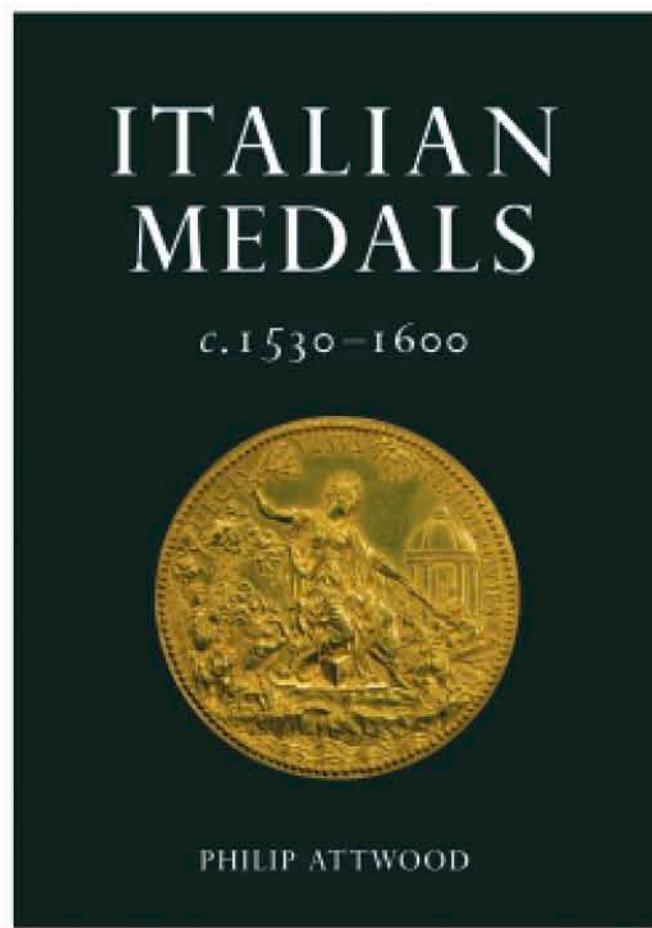
Fifteen scholarly titles were published during the period, including Philip Attwood's magisterial two-volume *Italian Medals c.1530–1600 in British Public Collections*, first proposed in 1984. Another result of many years' work is *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum: Fragments from Sir William Hamilton's second*

The British Museum Press published a wide range of books from scholarly titles to exhibition catalogues; many were bestsellers in their fields.

collection of vases recovered from the wreck of HMS Colossus.

The Occasional Papers series was renamed British Museum Research Publications in April 2004. Over 140 titles have been produced. Subjects include monographs on objects in the Museum, conference proceedings, archaeological excavation reports, scientific and conservation research, and collection catalogues. Between April 2002 and April 2004, ten titles were added including on-line publications.

The British Museum Company also produces a wide range of guidebooks to the Museum in eight different languages, postcards and CD-ROMs.





Coin of the Roman Emperor Libius Severus. See also the obverse, inside back cover.

4. Management and finance

The achievement of a period of stability is enabling the British Museum to rebuild and to develop its staffing and management so that it can begin to address its long-term ambitions.

At the start of the period there were major concerns about the Museum's finances. The drive to reduce costs led to a reduction in numbers of staff, cuts in budgets and a realignment of the Museum's management. By April 2004, the Museum was running a balanced budget, achieving key performance indicators and planning for a period of financial stability.

With the new top management team installed in 2002, the Museum undertook a review of the structure of governance, and redefined the national and international responsibilities of the Trustees. It also embarked on an organisation development strategy, which recognises the crucial role that all members of staff have in enabling the Museum to reach its ambitions.

A space planning team has been established to formulate and implement a new building strategy. This is addressing how space is best used in public areas, for storage and management of the collection, and for offices and other back-of-house needs. It will include plans for new and upgraded galleries and other visitor facilities.

There has also been a review of both intellectual and physical collections management. Two new management boards have been established, one for public programmes and one for research.

Funding

The strategy for the long-term funding of British Museum activities in London, Britain and the world is focused on strengthening self-generated revenue on-site, widening income generating activities in the international arena and building relationships with key supporters, whilst continuing to ensure that operating costs are managed as effectively and efficiently as possible.

In 2003/04 the Museum had a surplus of £0.1m, with income of £78.7m and costs of £78.6m across both revenue and capital. Headline figures are set out below for 2003/2004. (The full accounts for the years ended 31 March 2003 and 2004 can be found on the Museum's website.)

Financial Summary 2003/04	£m
Income	
Government grant	37.3
Commercial trading	15.9
Exhibition and other fees	3.9
Donations and sponsorship	18.0
Investment income	3.6
Total	78.7
Expenditure	
Care of the collection and research	14.1
Public access	12.5
Commercial trading	15.2
Exhibitions	3.0
Buildings management and maintenance	8.8
Other	1.2
Capital expenditure (including acquisitions)	23.8
Total	78.6

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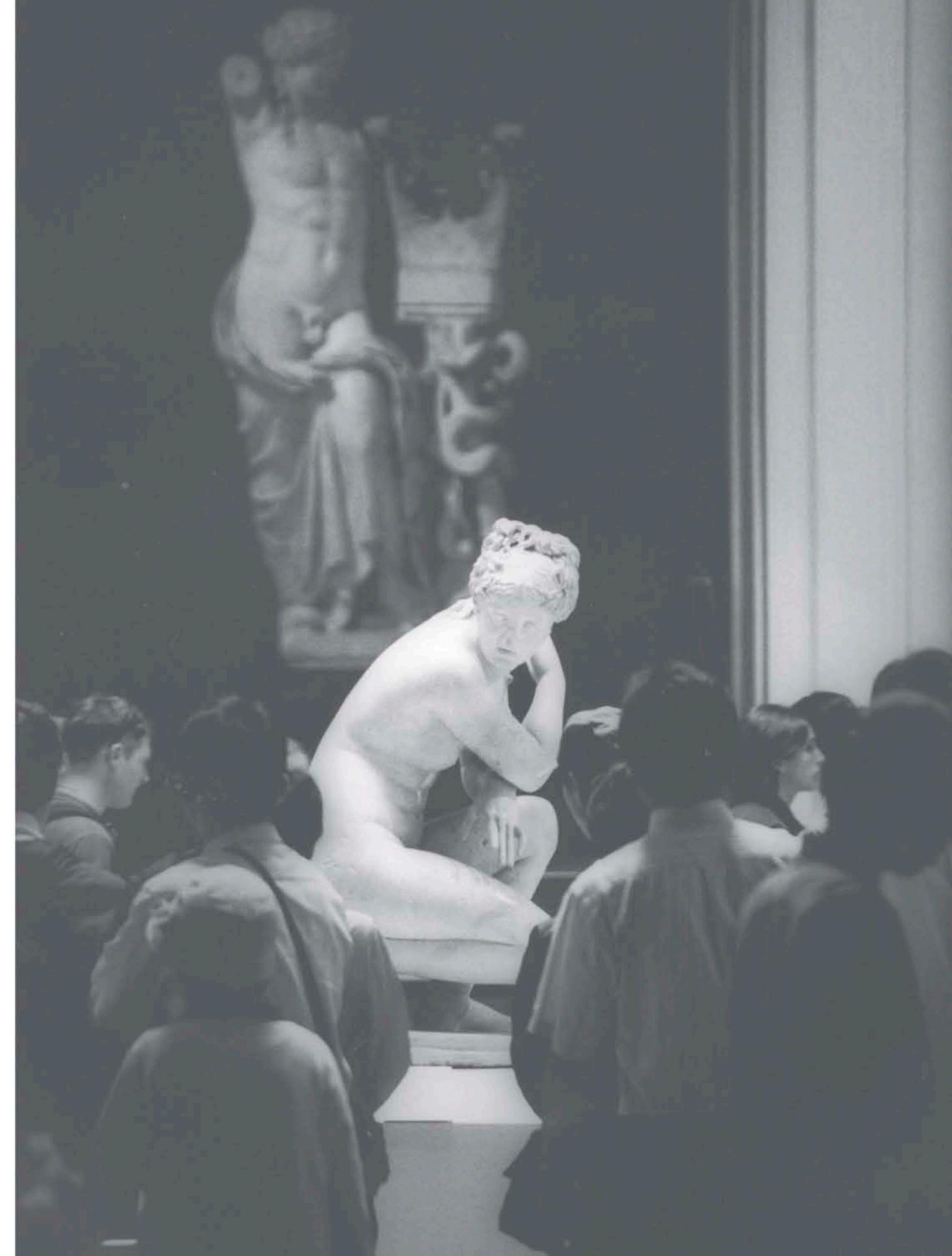
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Editor David Gibbs
 Design Pentagram
 Photography Phil Sayer (black and white), British Museum Photographic Service, Dafydd Jones, Steve Bell, SGI
 Editorial Coordinator Kate Eustace

Printed and bound in England by
 Gavin Martin Associates

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Every object in the collection has a rich and often surprising story to tell. This gold coin of the Roman Emperor Libius Severus was in fact made by the Germanic conquerors of the Roman Empire in the West; later became a piece of jewellery in Anglo-Saxon Britain and was even later hidden with other scrap jewellery at Oxborough, Norfolk. Discovered again in 2001, the coin now has a new life as part of the British Museum collection where it bears testimony to the long memory of mankind.