

THE
BRITISH
MUSEUM



VIEWS FROM AFRICA

Africa at the British Museum

MAY–JULY
2005

african garden
exhibitions
meet the artist
discussions
performances
family events
gallery talks
music • films
gallery trail



In association with the BBC

BBC

bbc.co.uk/africa

“There is a realm inside every human being that is Africa”

Ben Okri

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For further information about Africa 05

www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/africa05
www.bbc.co.uk/africa05

Booking for events

Unless otherwise stated, book events
through the Box Office 10.00–16.45 daily
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Africa at the British Museum

No one could have guessed how the world would change when Europeans first arrived in West Africa 500 years ago. Through war, art and independence; from Benin's 16th-century export of ivory goods to a Malawian mask of Charlie Chaplin – ***Views from Africa***, the second season of Africa at the British Museum, tells a story of the most ordinary, and extraordinary, encounters.

African encounters extend well beyond Europe, however. Human culture began on the continent and its influence, from Egypt to America, is captured in a new trail: ***Africa around the Museum*** (see page 14). The Sainsbury African Galleries are the Museum's permanent commitment to the heritage and cultures of Africa. Alongside one of the finest collections of African objects outside the continent, the galleries feature work by some of its foremost contemporary artists. Sculptures by some of these artists can be seen among the flora in *Ground Force's* final creation, the African garden – now on the Museum forecourt (see pages 4-5).

Besides special exhibitions, you will also find details in this booklet of the wide range of family activities, performances and films exploring a diversity of African connections.

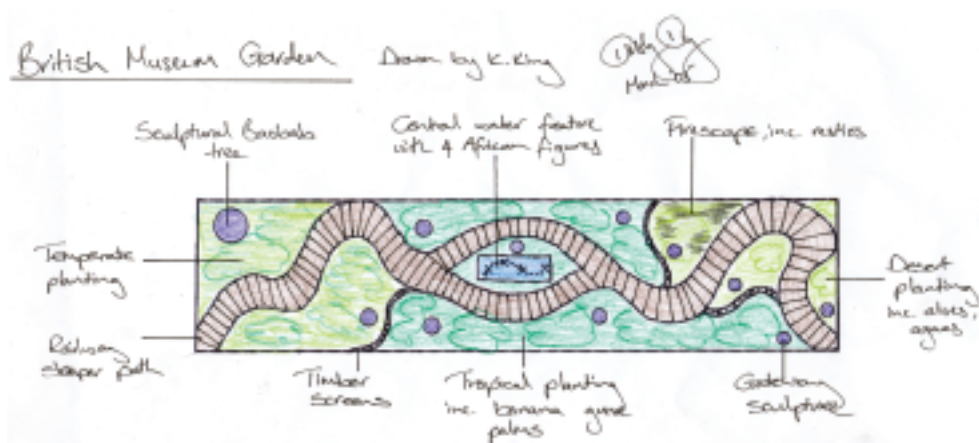
The London-wide Africa 05 season coincides with the United Kingdom's presidency of the G8 nations and the European Union, when Africa's future will be prominent on the international agenda. With funding from the British Government and the British Council, the Museum is currently expanding links with African countries, exchanging expertise with colleagues in African museums and lending objects from its collections. This is the first time that the collections of a major European museum have been made available in this way.

Africa garden

Ground Force at the British Museum

The Africa garden, the final creation by the team of *Ground Force*, the BBC's hugely popular garden transformation programme, is open on the Museum forecourt until September 2005. Designed as a walk through the continent, the Africa garden has three sections: desert, tropical and temperate. It invites visitors to make connections between the plant life, its native cultures and the African objects inside the British Museum. The Africa garden is part of a major BBC/British Museum partnership for Africa 05. *Ground Force*'s last programme, 'A Garden for Africa 05', showing the making of the garden at the Museum, will be broadcast in early July.

Museum forecourt, 09.00 – 18.00 daily
Admission free




Garden Art

TAE artists – Weapon wildlife

Mozambique suffered heavily from a civil war which ended in 1992 and remains one of the poorest countries in the world. However, artists Christavao Canhavato (Kester), Hilario Nhatugueja, Fiel dos Santos and Adelino Serafim Maté seek to challenge the view that Mozambican identity is static. The Gazelle, Snake, Bird and Crocodile sculptures in the Africa Garden are made from weapons decommissioned and broken up through the *Transforming Arms into Tools* (TAE) project, supported by Christian Aid. Like the Tree of Life in the Museum's Great Court and Kester's Throne of Weapons, currently touring venues across the UK, the works carry messages of transformation and hope for the future of Mozambique.



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAN AID / DAVID ROSE

 In recent years Mozambique's rehabilitated sugar cane plantations have become another symbol of hope for the country, bringing some \$350 million in growth investment and providing direct employment for more than 20,000 people.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE OCTOBER GALLERY



Indigenous Ghanaian plant life offers a rich store of medicinal properties. For example, the neem, mango, guava, pawpaw, orange, pear, cocoa and lime trees are panaceas for the treatment of malaria, jaundice, worming, measles, diabetes and flu.

El Anatsui – *Monument*

Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui is widely recognised as one of Africa's foremost contemporary artists. Taking the broad spectrum of indigenous African cultures as his extended canvas, El Anatsui's central themes concern both the erosion of inherited traditions by powerful external forces and the nature of their continued transmission. This complex relationship – between inorganic change and the organic preservation of heritage – is central to *Monument*, El Anatsui's tree trunk sculptures for the Africa Garden. El Anatsui's creations of organic and inorganic fusion continue in the Sainsbury African Galleries with an example from his 'Cloth' series.

Sokari Douglas Camp – *Asoebi*, or 'Lace, Sweat and Tears'

Sokari Douglas Camp moved from Nigeria to Britain as a child, but the imagery of Kalabari culture remains central to her work. Douglas Camp regularly visits family in the Niger Delta where she has observed the changes which political pressures and industrialization, in particular the discovery of oil, have brought to their lives. The female figures in her water sculpture for the Africa garden are collectively described by the Yoruba concept of *Asoebi*. The nearest English equivalent might be 'blood, sweat and tears', suggesting the beauty, suffering and indomitable spirit of her people. Kalabari influences continue in Douglas Camp's Otobo (hippopotamus) masquerade figure which visitors can see in the Sainsbury African Galleries (Room 25).



PHOTOGRAPH: CAROL HASLAM



An abundance of orchids, including some very rare species, grow in the Niger Delta where people attribute various powers and characteristics to them. Some of Sokari's earliest memories are of orchids in her garden, in particular how their ornate flowers would often resemble the dress and postures of Kalabari women.

Exhibitions

Views from Africa The Asahi Shimbun Displays

The Asahi Shimbun
JAPAN'S LEADING NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

Room 3, Main Entrance Hall
Until 24 July 2005
Admission free

Through a number of works made by African artists, Views from Africa brings to life the 500 year old story of African encounters with Europe.

From masks to salt cellars, the objects in *Views from Africa* reveal many different aspects of European relations with Africa – as perceived by Africans. While some objects were produced specifically for sale to Europeans, others were made for use in a number of contexts by African communities. Through the challenges of trade, religion, war and independence, *Views from Africa* reflects not only personal experiences but also a dynamic social engagement with change.



Wooden figures in European dress, Tanzania



Katanga crosses, Democratic Republic of Congo

The Africa Commission's report about the future development of the 'wealth of Africa' was presented at the British Museum in March. Commission delegates included Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Sir Bob Geldof.

www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/africa05

Wealth of Africa: 4000 years of money and trade

Room 69a
Until 26 June 2005
Admission free

From coins to copper ingots, raffia cloth and cowrie shells, discover the vital identities of a complex continent through its money and gift economies.

Wealth of Africa highlights a long and rich history spanning ancient kingdoms, colonialism and independence. The story begins with the use of weighed metal in ancient Egypt, and with Africa's earliest coins in Cyrenaica (modern day Libya) in the sixth century BC. The wealth of Mali, Zimbabwe and the Swahili coast show Africa's power and influence before the arrival of European traders whose legacy, including colonialism, continues to profoundly effect the economic expression of African cultures.

With help from the children of Mandela Supplementary School, Camden.

Exhibitions



PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGERY COURTESY OF SGI

Mummy: the inside story The BP special exhibition

Supported by BP



Joseph Hotung Great Court Gallery,
Room 35

Extended until 14 August 2005

For the first time the unopened 3000 year old mummy of Nesperunnub, priest of Karnak, reveals its secrets.

An extraordinary virtual reality film, using the latest CT-scan technology, *Mummy: the inside story* takes you back in time, under the wrappings and inside the body of the Mummy, to see the face of Nesperunnub recreated. With its accompanying exhibition, it brings to life one of the greatest cultures the world has ever known: the bridge between Africa and the Northern world. Featuring the voice of Sir Ian McKellen.

Admission £6, concessions £3

Children aged 5–16 £3, under 5s free

Family ticket £15

HALF PRICE TICKET OFFER

Thursday and Friday Lates (from 18.00)

Valid 1 May – 14 August 2005

DW The
AWARDS Brightest
2005 Light
in Design
WINNER

'completely mind blowing'

BBC Radio 4

'A fantastic voyage'

Evening Standard

'a rocking Mummy exhibition'

Time Out

Exhibitions

Tree of Life

Great Court
Until 29 August 2005
Admission free



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAN AID / DAVID ROSE

Made with decommissioned weapons from Mozambique's civil war, the Tree of Life sculpture is one of the centrepieces of Africa at the British Museum.

Through the *Transforming Arms into Tools* programme, funded by Christian Aid, people in Mozambique hand in guns in exchange for sewing machines, bicycles, even tractors. The weapons are dismantled and the artists of the Nucleo de Arte make sculptures out of them. Created by Christavao Canhavato (Kester), Hilario Nhatugueja, Fiel dos Santos and Adelino Serafim Mathé, a collective whose work also features in the Ground Force African Garden, this is a remarkable symbol of Mozambique's hopes for peace.

Throne of Weapons UK tour

As part of its commitment to Africa and to sharing its collections across the UK, the Museum is going on tour with the *Throne of Weapons* (Kester, Mozambique 2001). The sculpture comes out of the *Transforming Arms into Tools* project which also produced the Tree of Life.

In addition to the venues listed below (some information may be subject to change), there will be excursions within several cities to schools and community, arts and shopping centres.

Supported by the UK National Commission for UNESCO

20 April – 8 May
Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
0191 477 1495
www.twmmuseums.org.uk

10 May – 5 June
National Museum & Gallery Cardiff
029 2039 7951
www.nmgw.ac.uk

7 – 12 June
Liverpool Cathedral
0151 702 7220
www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk



© Kester

14 June – 7 July
Manchester Museum
0161 275 2634
www.museum.man.ac.uk

9 – 23 July
Perth Museum & Art Gallery
01738 632488
www.pkc.gov.uk

1 – 30 October (Black History Month)
Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery
0117 922 3571
www.bristol-city.gov.uk

1 – 27 November
Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry
024 7683 2565
www.coventrymuseum.org.uk

Music

African music: discussion and performance

Thursday 16 June, 18.30 – 20.30

BP Lecture Theatre

£5, concessions £3

Also book online

African music has influenced centuries of Western music, from samba and jazz to reggae, funk and soul. Trace the connections, with music from Mercury Prize nominee, Soweto Kinch, and Zimbabwean singer-songwriter Netsayi, plus readings on hip-hop culture from Whitbread Novel Winner, Patrick Neate. Chaired by writer Diran Adebayo.



PHOTOGRAPH: KOFI ALLEN

Ritual art in performance for Africa 05

Saturday 25 June, 14.00 – 16.00

Stevenson Lecture Theatre

£5, concessions £3

An exciting contemporary African dance-theatre experience in the Sainsbury African Galleries as live drumming, chants and praise singing communicate the spiritual and emotional experience behind ritual art works. Koromanti Arts present this short performance as part of a seminar featuring visual artists, dancers and musicians from the African arts field.



Celebrating Africa: a showcase for African culture

Saturday 16 July, 12.00 – 18.00

Admission free

Celebrating Africa, in conjunction with the Africa-Europe Forum, brings together African community, arts and educational groups, with NGOs and governmental organisations, to share their experiences of Africa in Britain. Witness displays of African arts and crafts in the Great Court, enjoy the music and dancing of the Oduduwa Talking Drummers from Nigeria and Congolese 6-piece Kasai Masai in the BP Theatre and join storytellers and artists in the Sainsbury African Galleries.



Kasai Masai

Meet the artists

Admission free, just drop in

Sokari Douglas Camp: in and out of Africa

6 May, 13.15, Room 25

Sokari Douglas Camp is a metal worker who creates colossal sculptures from welded steel. She moved to Britain as a child but Nigerian influences are very much a driving force in her work. She talks about works currently on display in the Sainsbury African Galleries and the *Ground Force* Africa garden.

Zineb Sedira: retelling histories

1 July, 13.00,
Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Zineb Sedira's work is informed by her French, Algerian and British identity. She employs video, photography, and installation to investigate gender, representation, family, language and memory. This session includes *Retelling Histories*, a video which brings to the fore the intertwining of personal and social events, the legacies of war and migration on the lives of a mother and a daughter.



© ZINEB SEDIRA

Zineb Sedira: *Mother, Father and I*, 2003. Courtesy of The Agency, London, and Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris.

'H' Patten: African stories

9 and 23 July, 13.15, Room 25

Director of Koromanti Arts, 'H' Patten, is a dancer, choreographer and storyteller who brings together African and Caribbean traditional and popular forms. Here, he brings to life some of the objects in the African Galleries to retell old stories.

Koromanti Arts will perform *Ritual* on 25 June. See page 9 for details.

Other events

Discussions and Performances

Writing about Africa

Thursday 26 May, 18.30 – 20.00

BP Lecture Theatre

£5, concessions £3

Writing is always a political act, but in whose hands does the story lie? Debate with Onyekachi Wambu, Aminatta Forna and Richard Dowden. Chaired by Henry Bonsu.

The Guardian and British Museum Public Forum

Wednesday 15 June, 19.00

BP Lecture Theatre

Chaired by Jon Snow

Open University at the British Museum

Sunday 22 May, 11.00 – 1600

Clore Education Centre

Admission free

Drop in to a free day of talks and tours with the Open University to celebrate Adult Learners' Week. Including discussions with leading experts on the AIDS crisis in Africa, Mungo Park's Enlightenment adventures, and the origins of contemporary African art.

Family events

Half-term activities Africa 05

31 May – 3 June, 11.00 – 16.00

Free activities based on the many cultures of Africa and the chance to win great prizes on our African Treasure Trail. Further details and programme from the Reading Room.

www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/education/families



Free gallery talks

These last about 50 minutes.

Please meet in the room specified.

12 May, 13.15, Room 69a

**Colonialism and Independence:
African money and changing identities**

14 May, 13.15, Room 4

**Egypt and the Hittites:
Tutankhamun to Ramesses the Great**

17 May, 13.15, Room 25

**Contemporary Art in
the Sainsbury African Galleries**

1 June, 13.15, Room 4

Pharaohs of Middle Kingdom Egypt

9 June, 13.15, Room 69a

**The riches of West Africa and the
trans-Saharan trade**

23 June, 13.15, Room 69a

**What is money?
African currencies and African history**

12 July, 13.15, Room 25

**Configuring the contemporary
art of Africa**

14 July, 13.15, Information Desk

**Africa through the ages:
African objects around the Museum**

16 July, 13.15, Room 65

**Egypt and Nubia to the reign
of Ramesses II**

Films

A series of African films with post-screening discussions.
In partnership with the Royal Anthropological Institute.
Admission free.



The day I will never forget

Friday 13 May, 18.30

Documentary exploring the local dimensions of the female circumcision debate in Kenyan societies. Featuring Fardhosa, a nurse on a tireless campaign to open people's eyes to the dangers of circumcision; Simalo, a Masai runaway girl; and the group of Marakwet schoolgirls who successfully challenged their parents and centuries-old tradition in a court of law.

Director: Kim Longinotto
2002, 92 mins

Stevenson Lecture Theatre
Admission free, no pre-booking



The day I will never forget, 2002

Taxi to Timbuktu

Friday 10 June, 18.30

'In the past we went abroad to keep the village alive. But today we are finding that abroad is closed. And if abroad is closed then we are all closed.'

The men of Batama have gone abroad hoping to earn enough money to keep their families alive. Finding themselves in France, New York and Tokyo, they perform the roles the natives would not. A 'faction' film about Africa and the world at the end of the twentieth century.

Director: Christopher Walker
1995, 52 mins

Stevenson Lecture Theatre
Admission free, no pre-booking



PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH CASTLE

Films

Masai Women

Thursday 30 June, 18.30

The Masai are cattle herders living in the East African Rift Valley. Men have exclusive control over rights to cattle and women are dependent throughout their lives on father, husband or son for rights to access to property.

This television film, part of the *Disappearing World* series, uses extensive interviews to detail key moments in the women's lives.

Director: Chris Curling
1974, 53 mins

and

Masai Manhood

A vivid view of the lives of Masai men, especially of the *moran* (warriors) and the dramatic *eunoto* ceremony which marks their transition from warriorhood to the responsibilities of elderhood.

A fascinating insight into rituals and ceremonies which have now disappeared.

Director: Chris Curling
1975, 53 mins

BP Lecture Theatre

Admission free, no pre-booking



PHOTOGRAPH CHRISTIAN AID / DAVID ROSE

Tree of Guns

Friday 29 July & Thursday 25 August,
13.00

Tree of Guns follows the artists inspired by Mozambique's *Transforming Arms into Tools* project as they create the Tree of Life sculpture, currently on display in the Great Court of the Museum (see page 8). Hear the stories of hope from the artists, former child soldiers and Mozambicans working for peace. Production: Rooftop Productions and Christian Aid for BBC4
2005, 30 mins

Stevenson Lecture Theatre
Admission free, no pre-booking

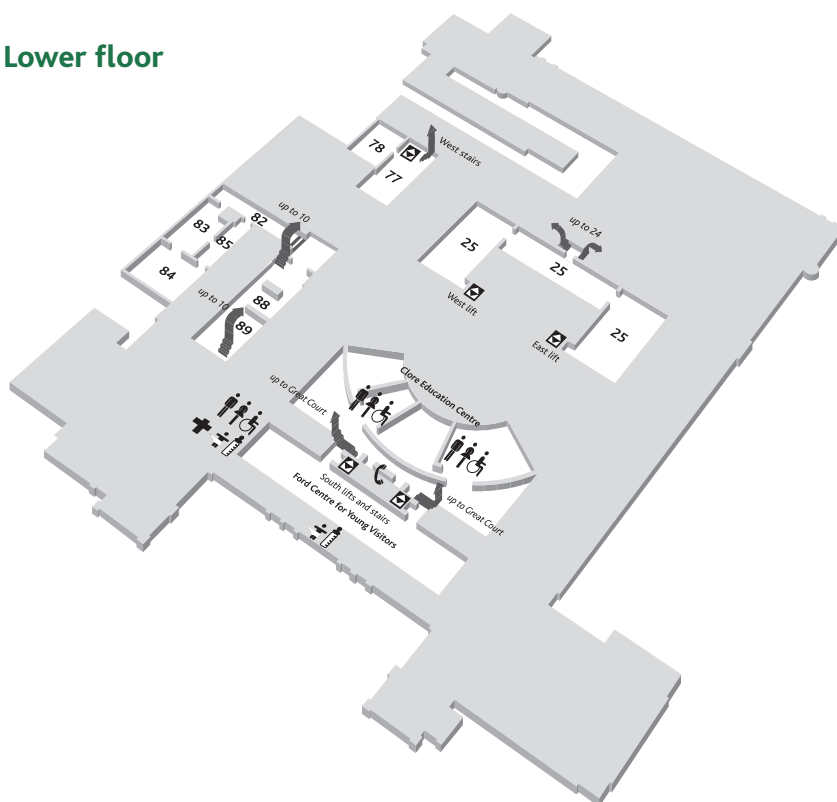
Floor plans

Sainsbury African Galleries

Since they opened to the public in 2001 the African Galleries (Room 25, see below) have provided not only a showcase for some of the British Museum's remarkable collection of African art but also a lively forum for debate on the subject of how such work should be displayed.

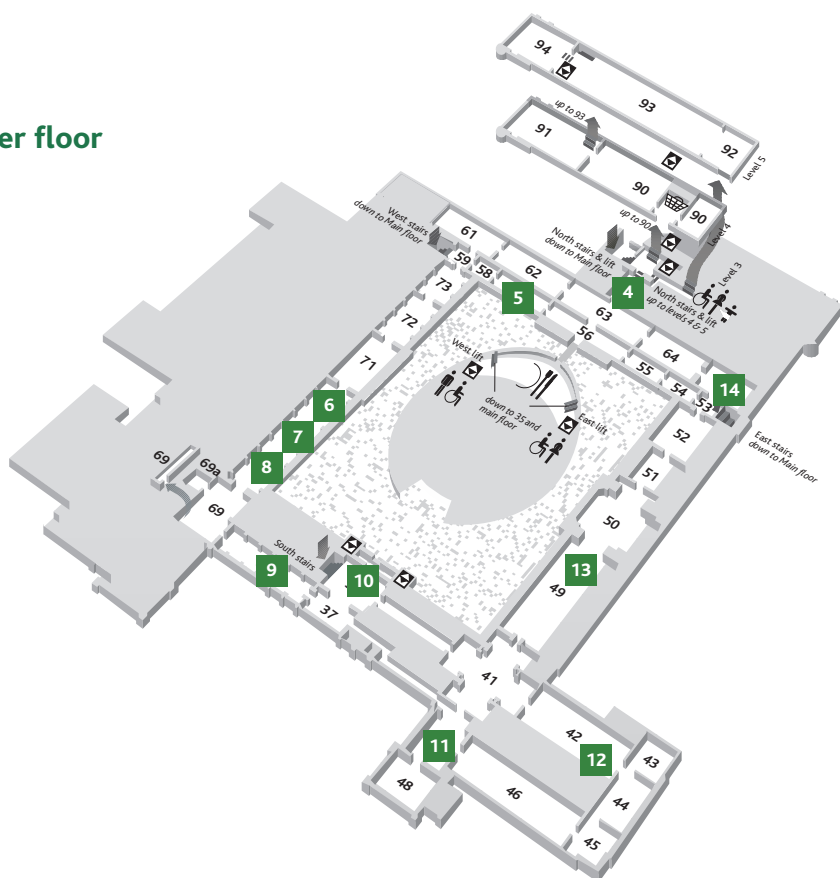
Complementing pieces on display in the galleries, work by some of Africa's foremost contemporary artists can currently be seen in the African garden on the Museum forecourt until September.

Lower floor

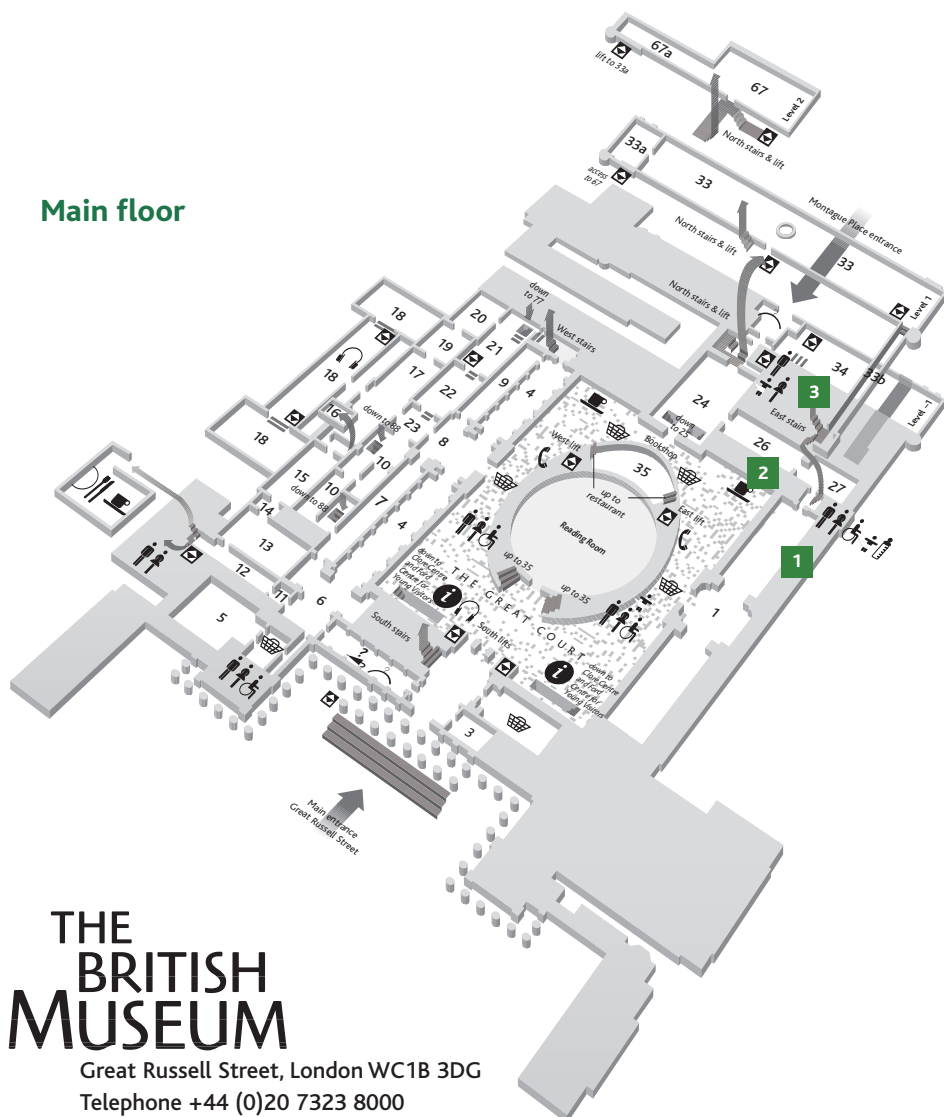


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Upper floor



Main floor



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AFRICA at the British Museum

Africa trail

Africa around the Museum

Since the start of human history - from Egypt to America - Africa's influence on the cultures of the world has been immense. Follow the Africa trail around the Museum and see for yourself. For detailed gallery plans see page 17.

What do you think?

As well as labels written by Museum curators, we asked people from London's African heritage communities for their personal responses to the objects here.

◀ Look out for our Africa sign in the galleries

What about you? What do these objects make you think about?

1

Room 1, case 24

Asante diplomatic gifts, West Africa, 19th century (Main floor)



2

Room 26, case 5

Asante-style drum, Virginia, about 1730 (Main floor)



'It wasn't just people the slave traders brought to the American colonies but their art and culture too.'

3

Room 34, case 6

Contemporary ceramics, Tunisia, 1998 (Main floor)



4



Room 66

Ethiopian painting, Ethiopia,
19th century (Upper floor)

5

Room 57, case 12

Ivory from Nimrud, Phoenician
9th – 8th century BC (Upper floor)



'...religion, art and the human mind can all work as one.'

6



Room 70, case 1

Bronze head of Augustus, Meroe, Sudan
27 BC – AD 14 (Upper floor)

7

Room 70, case 18

Crocodile-skin parade armour, Egypt
3rd – 4th century AD (Upper floor)



8



Room 70, statue near exit to Room 69

Statue of Septimius Severus,
Alexandria, Egypt,
about AD 193 – 200 (Upper floor)



'...at last the African presence in ancient Britain is being acknowledged.'

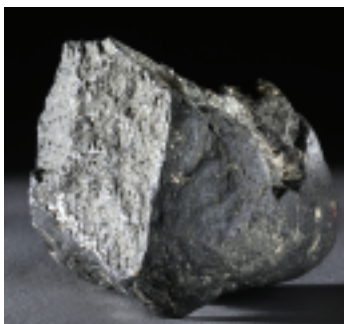
9

Room 68, case 10

Treasure from the Salcombe Cannon Site, Devon, 16th – 17th century (Upper floor)



10



Room 36, case 1

Chopping tools from Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, about 1.8 million years old (Upper floor)

11

Room 47, case 7

Blue glass sugar bowl, English, early 19th century (Upper floor)



12



Room 42, case 11

Asante ewer, Ghana
1390 – 1400 (Upper floor)

13

Room 49, case 15

Mauretanian cavalryman, London, 2nd – 3rd century AD (Upper floor)



'These are amazing pieces. They have great meaning to me personally because this is how it came to be known that human history started in Africa.'

14



Room 65, case 10

Sphinx of Taharqo, from Kawa, Sudan, 690 – 664 BC (Upper floor)