

# BRITISH MUSEUM FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS 2011

*Please note that exhibition titles and dates are subject to change and should be checked before going to press.*

**Please print the following information next to all listings:**

**Website:** [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

**phone:** 020 7323 8299

**ticket office:** 020 7323 8181

## MAJOR NEW EXHIBITIONS FOR 2011

### **Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World**

Room 35

3 March – 3 July 2011

This exhibition is a unique opportunity to see an exceptional collection of over 200 objects on loan from the recently rebuilt National Museum in Kabul and which show how ancient Afghanistan was at the heart of cross-cultural connections. It revolves around precious objects drawn from some of the most important sites in the country. Each tells a story of how the inhabitants traded with or were influenced by the fashions of their ancient neighbours. The core of the exhibition draws on excavated finds from the Greek frontier city of Ai Khanum on the Oxus which had been founded in the third century BC by a successor of Alexander the Great, some of the contents of a sealed strongroom from a first century capital of a local Kushan ruler, and gold ornaments from nomad graves at Tillya-tepe. Together they illustrate some of the tensions between settled and nomadic communities, and the fragility of cultural heritage.

### **Treasures of Heaven: saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe**

Round Reading Room

23 June – 9 October 2011

This major travelling exhibition will bring together for the first time some of the finest surviving sacred treasures of the medieval age. Drawing on the pre-eminent collections of the British Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio and the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore as well as European church treasuries, including the Vatican's Sancta Sanctorum, the exhibition will explore the centrality of relic veneration in medieval religious devotion. The relics of Christ and the saints – objects associated with them, such as body parts or possessions – were valued from the earliest Christian times as a bridge between heaven and earth. They were accordingly set into lavishly ornate containers of silver and gold studded with precious stones. The extremely opulent materials that enshrined the relics were considered to have spiritual and symbolic value and were understood by medieval audiences as a reflection of the sacred matter within. *Treasures of Heaven* will document the development of these astonishing objects from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD to the turbulent years of the Reformation and beyond.

### **Ice Age art**

Room 35

27 October 2011 – February 2012

Our genius for representing the world around us in drawings, paintings and sculpture is not something recent. It is older even than the great civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome and China. In Europe art appears at least 35,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. This exhibition will show some of the great masterpieces of this era. Sculptures and drawings of humans and animals will be set among pictures from the great paintings from caves such as Chauvet in France and Altamira in Spain. Contemporary images will be also used on a journey of exploration into an artistic world not so remote from our own. The first show of its kind in the UK, this exhibition will enthral art lovers and with its models and miniatures of animals provide fascination for all the family.

## **OTHER EXHIBITIONS**

### **Eric Gill: 'Wilful Child'**

10 February 2011 - 7 August 2011

Admission free, Room 69a

The artist Eric Gill was noted for his public sculpture, typography and, more recently, his unconventional private life. This small display will explore the range of his artistic practice, including his medallion work, stamp designs and various publications. Gill is sometimes understood as being primarily a religious artist, but the smaller-scale works in this display provoke a deeper and subtler appreciation of the different elements within his work.

### **Out of Australia: Prints and Drawings from Sidney Nolan to Rover Thomas**

26 May – 11 September 2011

Admission free, Room 90

Drawn from the British Museum's recently formed collection of Australian works on paper, this exhibition will cover the period from 1940s to the present. It will begin with the distinctive school of Australian artists known as the 'Angry Penguins' and follow the main developments in Australian graphic art, concluding with the rise of Aboriginal printmaking. This will be conveyed through outstanding examples of prints and drawings by all the major Australian artists of this period including Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Albert Tucker and Fred Williams, together with work by the foremost indigenous artists Rover Thomas, Dorothy Napangardi and Judy Watson among others. The exhibition will be the first major show of Australian art in London for at least a decade, and the largest and most ambitious devoted to Australian works on paper ever held outside of Australia itself.

### **Baskets and Belonging: Indigenous Australian Histories**

26 May – 28 August 2011

Admission Free, Room 91

In Australia people made and make a wide diversity of beautiful baskets, using materials from the landscape to which they belong. Indigenous Australians are not a single group, but rather many interconnecting groups, each belonging to different territory. At the time of European settlement they had been living on the continent for at least 60,000 years, and spoke more than 200 languages. This exhibition displays an important collection of historic baskets which reflect this diversity with elegant and sculptural forms, and painted decoration.

### **The Asahi Shimbun Displays: Objects in focus**

Room 3 sits just inside the main entrance to the British Museum and hosts a series of free regularly changing exhibitions focused on a single object or theme.

A **Sikh Turban** will be the first object displayed. This is a tall 'fortress turban', which would have been worn by a Nihang Sikh warrior. It is adorned with steel quoits, blades and a badge, which were inserted in the folds of the fabric, placed over the turban or stitched onto it. One of the steel weapons is stamped with the insignia of the Sikh police battalion, 'Rattray's 45th', founded in the 1850s. To this day, turbans are an important article of faith and identity.

The next display will feature the work of **Xu Bing**, principal of the Beijing Art Academy and an artist with a growing international reputation. He will create a large shadow and light box that replicates *Thatched Cottage in the Western Mountains*, a painted handscroll by master painter Tang Yin, c.1470-1523. Xu Bing will assemble the piece in Room 3. The original scroll forms part of the British Museum's collections and will be displayed alongside the installation.

The third display will probably feature a Pacific object – details will be provided when this has been confirmed.

The final object in focus for 2011 will be **The Great Wave**, perhaps the most famous Japanese print today. Hokusai was one of the leading painters and print artists of the nineteenth century. This work shows Mount Fuji, Japan's highest mountain, cleverly dwarfed by a towering wave. It marks a highpoint in Hokusai's creative use of deep spatial perspective that ultimately derived from European art.

## **EXHIBITIONS AT OTHER VENUES IN THE UK**

Throughout 2011 the British Museum will be touring exhibitions to venues across the country through the Partnership UK programme, in addition to contributing loans to numerous other exhibitions and displays nationwide. Highlights include:

### **High Kicks and Low Life: Toulouse-Lautrec Prints**

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864 – 1901) embraced the life of a bohemian artist, frequenting galleries by day, whilst turning his attention by night to the actresses, dancers and prostitutes who populated Montmartre where Toulouse-Lautrec settled in 1884. Through his prolific graphic output Toulouse-Lautrec's memorable cast of characters has created one of the most abiding impressions of place and period. This exhibition presents a fine selection of the British Museum's exceptional holdings of Toulouse-Lautrec's graphic work and following successful showings at Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery and Mima, Middlesbrough, will tour to two venues in 2011: **Bedford Museum** (15 January – 10 April 2011) and **National Museum Wales, Cardiff** (23 April – 17 July 2011)

### **China: Journey to the East**

*China: Journey to the East* is the largest UK loan of Chinese material the Museum has ever undertaken with more than 150 objects. Supplemented by items from partner museum collections it offers visitors the chance to better understand 3,000 years of Chinese history and culture. The exhibition, which has already been shown in Bristol, Coventry and Basingstoke, Sunderland and York, will reach its conclusion in 2011 at **Manchester Museum** where it closes on 26 June. To date the exhibition has been seen by over 235,000 visitors. The tour is supported by BP and is a CHINA NOW legacy project.

### **Revolution on Paper: Mexican Prints 1910 to 1960**

The British Museum will be touring the prints exhibition *Revolution on Paper* to two venues in 2011, kindly supported by The Monument Trust, the **Djanogly Art Gallery** in Nottingham (until 27 February 2011) and **Newcastle's Hatton Gallery** 17 June to 14 August 2011) Some of the finest of these prints were produced by the three great men of Mexican art of the period known as 'los tres grandes': Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. The exhibition includes Rivera's famous Emiliano Zapata and his horse which has achieved iconic status in 20th-century art. It also features works by artists that rose to prominence after the founding of the Taller del Gráfica Popular (the national print workshop) in 1937, and earlier works by José Guadalupe Posada, who was posthumously recognised by the revolutionaries as the father of printmaking in Mexico. All the prints in the exhibition come from the British Museum's collection which has been acquired thanks to the generosity of the Aldama Foundation, Dave and Reba Williams and The Art Fund.

### **Warriors of the Plains: 200 years of Native North American honour and ritual**

This exhibition focuses on the material culture of Native North American Indians of the Plains between 1800 and the present, and the importance of the objects in a social and ceremonial context. The world of world of the Plains Indians is explored through exceptional examples of feather headdresses, shields, moccasins, painted hides, scalps, pipes, tomahawks, and traditional and contemporary dress. Although many of these items may seem initially familiar from popular culture, the exhibition uncovers the deeper ritual significance of these iconic objects. Following a

successful showing at the British Museum, the exhibition will tour from Spring 2011 to **Lotherton Hall, Leeds, Ulster American Folk Museum, Royal Albert Museum, Exeter** and **Manchester Museum**.

### **Ancient Egypt Touring Exhibition**

Following the success of the BM travelling exhibitions *Ancient Greeks* and *China: Journey to the East*, this exhibition will tour to five venues in the UK from summer 2011. The British Museum holds the largest collection of Egyptian objects outside of Egypt and this material is universally popular with visitors and borrowers. This large scale exhibition will focus on Aspects of Egyptian Kingship, looking at the three main roles of the pharaoh in ancient Egypt – as head of state, as chief priest and as commander of the army. The exhibition will tour from summer 2011 and into 2013 at the **Great North Museum, Newcastle, World Museum Liverpool, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery** and **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow**.

## **INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS**

### **The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece**

*The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece* contains 125 objects from the British Museum's rich Greek and Roman collection. This exhibition offers a visually engaging and thought-provoking exploration of the human condition seen through ancient Greek eyes. Over two thousand years the Greeks experimented with representing the human body in works that range from abstract simplicity to full-blown realism. Through this essential and long lasting theme of human representation, the exhibition offers to the public a unique opportunity to engage with artworks which have shaped our Western aesthetics. The artefacts to be displayed include "Discobolus", the iconic representation of a discus thrower which had never been on loan from the Museum before this tour. The exhibition will tour to three venues in 2011, **National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan** (15 October 2010 – 7 February 2011), **Kobe City Museum, Kobe, Japan** (12 March – 12 June 2011) and **Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, Japan** (6 July – 26 September 2011).

### **Mummy: the inside story**

*Mummy: the inside story* uses state of the art scanning and projection technology to take visitors on a 3D immersive experience into the coffin of Nesperennub, a priest who lived and died in Egypt nearly 3,000 years ago. Nesperennub's story, narrated by Sir Ian McKellen, is told through his 'virtual unwrapping' combined with dramatic reconstructions of his life and mummification in ancient Egypt. The 3D film is followed by an exhibition of 80 objects from the British Museum's world famous Egyptian collection. Visitors are able to see the mummy of Nesperennub and unique examples of funerary and mummification pieces from ancient Egypt. The exhibition will be shown at the **Museum of Fine Arts, Virginia, USA** (19 November 2011 – 11 March 2012).

**For images or further information please contact the press office or email [communications@britishmuseum.org](mailto:communications@britishmuseum.org)**

Hannah Boulton, Head of Press and Public Relations: 020 7323 8522  
[hboulton@britishmuseum.org](mailto:hboulton@britishmuseum.org)

Esme Wilson, Press Assistant: 020 7323 8394  
[ewilson@britishmuseum.org](mailto:ewilson@britishmuseum.org)

For public information please look on our website [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) or call 020 7323 8299