

## THE BRITISH MUSEUM

### BORROWING FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS AND DRAWINGS

#### Advice and information for potential borrowers

1. Objects will only be lent to properly established authorities and to proper venues. They must have a professional staff competent to deal with the administration and handling of loans. Exhibitions must be open to the general public, and should contribute to knowledge and understanding of their subject.

2. Applications should be made by the organising authority in writing to the Keeper of Prints and Drawings a minimum of nine months before the exhibition is due to open. They should explain clearly what the exhibition is about, and why the presence of our work(s) is important for its success. It is not necessary for the organising curator to have discussed the project with a member of Prints and Drawings staff beforehand. But we do expect the curator of the exhibition to have come to the British Museum and to have seen the works requested; we find it difficult to regard any request as serious where this has not happened. Borrowers should be certain that they have completed their research before writing; additional supplementary requests cause a great deal of extra work and are normally rejected. If requests for loans are also being made to other departments of the British Museum, this should be clearly stated so that we can make arrangements to co-ordinate administration.

3. Since the Department receives more loan requests than it is able to handle, choices have to be made. We expect to lend to most reasonable requests from venues in the United Kingdom, but to fewer abroad. In the case of foreign loans, we prioritise on the grounds of the importance of our objects to the success of the exhibition, the importance of the exhibition itself, and the quality of the associated catalogue. It may not be possible to lend works that require significant conservation treatment before they can travel. But we frequently are forced to turn down worthy applications through lack of staff resource to handle them.

4. Although there is no formal limit to the numbers of works requested, in most circumstances the number will be limited to what one courier is able to carry by hand. Exhibitions may be toured, but the potential length of exposure of any object is limited by the nature of the work and how long it has been exhibited in the past. Only in special circumstances will watercolours be lent to more than two venues, and drawings in other media to more than three. Works will not normally be lent to any single venue for longer than three months.

5. Loan requests must give full information to enable us to identify and find the works requested. The register number is essential, but is sufficient in itself only for those parts of the collection entered on our computer database. For other works, we also need the artist under whose name the work is kept, or the subject series where the work is placed. In most cases we also need to know if the work is mounted or unmounted, and in what size/century/school it is placed; standard catalogue reference numbers are always helpful. Absence of this information will be taken to imply that the curator has never come here to see the object.

6. Venues must be able to satisfy the internationally recognised standards of security and

protection against fire, and we submit all requests for approval by the National Museums' Security Advisor. Framed works must be screwed to the walls by four mirror plates (our frames come with these attached), and we sometimes require security screws. If works are placed in cases, they must be constructed sturdily, and have high-quality locks. We will require to be sent details of display cases and their locking systems before works can travel. Any further recommendations and stipulations that are made by the National Security Advisor must be adhered to. We particularly draw attention to the fact that smoking is not permitted in the place of exhibition or the adjacent areas, not only during the exhibition but also during mounting and dismounting; we have in the past had much trouble on this score.

7. We normally stipulate that the lighting levels in the exhibition do not exceed 80 lux (100 lux in the case of black and white prints, and 50 lux for watercolours); that the relative humidity should be maintained at 55% (plus or minus 5%); and that the temperature should be maintained at 65 degrees (plus or minus 5).

8. All loans from the Museum to museums which are not wholly or largely funded by the UK Exchequer must normally be covered by either an adequate commercial insurance or an indemnity (see Clause 6 "Risk and Insurance" in the Loan Agreement) and the Government Indemnity Guidelines shall apply wherever appropriate. Indemnities may be accepted in lieu of commercial insurance when they are offered by overseas governments. In certain circumstances, subject to acceptable security and environmental conditions, British non-national collections may be exempted from the requirement to insure except for minimum liability. The British Museum has arranged standard insurance terms with approved agents whose conditions of contract we have approved. But we are willing in principle to accept insurance offered by borrowers, though in these cases we expect to see the precise terms in order to assure ourselves that the cover is adequate and that no exclusion clauses cause us concern. The only exclusion clauses that we will allow are those that exclude loss or damage caused by:

- (a) the negligence or other wrongful act of the British Museum or its servants or agents;
- (b) the condition (including inherent vice or pre-existing flaw) of the Objects at the beginning of the Term;
- (c) a third party claiming to be entitled to any Objects;
- (d) repair, restoration, cleaning, conservation or any other work carried out on the Objects by the Borrower or their respective servants or agents where such work is carried out with the British Museum's permission; or
- (e) war, hostilities or war-like operations.

We do still require coverage for acts of terrorism, riot, civil commotion, piracy and hijacking.

9. The Trustees always require works to be transported under the care of a courier, who will usually be a member of the staff of the British Museum or another United Kingdom national museum. If works are excessively large or numerous, they may be sent framed in crates. Works are hand-carried by preference, in which case frames may be sent out separately in advance. Travelling within the United Kingdom is normally by van or train; in the latter case we require a first class ticket and standard fare when returning. Travel abroad is usually by air, and we require business class tickets when loan objects are being hand-carried in the passenger cabin of an aircraft. Economy class flights are acceptable on short-haul flights when objects are not being carried, but are not acceptable for long-haul flights.

In certain circumstances (particularly in transfers between venues of touring exhibitions) and by special arrangement, we may agree to allow the courier to be a member of staff of the

borrowing institution. In these cases we require that the courier gives us a personal undertaking to act on our behalf. If Customs require to examine objects, we expect the borrower to make every effort to do this at the exhibition site, not at the point of entry.

10. All costs that the British Museum incurs in connection with making loans must be met by the borrower. The chief of these are:

- (a) conservation, mounting and packing; we are normally able to supply frames and cases from stock, but conservation and mounting costs are always charged to the borrower.
- (b) transport, customs, shipping agents and couriers, including travel insurance; normally a courier within Europe will expect to stay two nights, to America three nights, and further abroad longer. The borrower is expected to pay the cost of the hotel and give a reasonable *per diem* sum in cash on arrival to cover the courier's expenses.
- (c) photography; apart from any photographs that the borrower may require for his own purposes, the British Museum itself requires a photograph as a security record.
- (d) administration; we recover the hidden costs of staff time involved in administering the loan on behalf of the borrower. This money is used to pay the salary of an extra member of staff who deals with loans. For works on paper, this fee currently begins at a minimum of £1500 (+VAT) and increases according to the size and complexity of the loan. The administration charge (but not the conservation charge in (a) above) is currently waived for venues within the United Kingdom. (Please note that the charge is not per item, but per operation.)

11. The Keeper of the Department has authority to give approval to loans up to a total valuation (per loan, not object) of £1 million. Over that value, loans can only be approved by the Director or Trustees. Borrowers should therefore expect delays before securing formal approval of high value loans, and allow more time in their application. The Keeper is permitted to approve subsequent changes of date and certain changes of content.

12. Once this approval has been given, borrowers will be required to sign a formal Loan Agreement accepting the British Museum's terms and conditions of loan. In the case of travelling exhibitions, each borrower will be required to sign a separate Agreement. Specimens of this Agreement are available on request.

13. The British Museum normally gives permission for its photographs to be used free of reproduction fees in the catalogue of the exhibition; but a copy of the catalogue (hard-back if available) must be supplied to us on publication. We will also allow our photographs to be freely used for press and publicity purposes, but we will require a reproduction fee (after previous agreement) if they are to be exploited commercially. We do not allow our works to be photographed by the borrower; the only exception is in general shots of the installation, or by television cameras for publicity purposes. In these cases we require that the lighting used be kept to a minimum, and that no cases are opened and the objects are not handled. Photography by the public in the exhibition gallery is not permitted.

14. We will do our best to complete and return borrowers loan forms, but we do expect the borrower to have completed as much as possible before they are sent to us. We are not willing to supply cataloguing information (such as medium, size and references) as we expect this to be ascertained by the organising curator before the loan request is made. Most of this information is now available on the web on the collections database.

Antony Griffiths  
Keeper

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