

# THE BRITISH MUSEUM



## Jewellery: adornment, identity and magic

A TOURING EXHIBITION FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM

# Jewellery: adornment, identity and magic

Throughout history, skilfully crafted personal ornaments have been worn by men and women in order to decorate the body, communicate social status and identity, and to provide protection against malign spirits and misfortune.

Drawing on the unparalleled collection of the British Museum, this exhibition examines the varied ways that jewellery has been used in different human societies. It explores the use of body ornaments to proclaim rank, status and wealth, to indicate political or religious allegiance and to express sentimental attachment. The practical functions of jewellery are also discussed, for example its use in the fastening of clothes, as a seal or stamp of authority and as a form of currency. A particular focus will be placed on the use, widespread in many societies, of amuletic and talismanic jewellery that is valued for its magical or spiritual properties. Lastly, the exhibition will illustrate some of the diverse materials and techniques that have been exploited across the ages to produce an extraordinary range of body ornaments.

## Further information

### Curator

Brendan Moore has worked in a number of the Museum's curatorial departments as a collections manager, exhibition curator and project manager. In recent years, he has worked on major cross-departmental projects including the development of the award-winning Enlightenment Gallery and television series about the Museum for Channel 4 and the BBC.

### For further details of this exhibition

Email [internationaltours@britishmuseum.org](mailto:internationaltours@britishmuseum.org) or visit [www.britishmuseum.org/internationaltours](http://www.britishmuseum.org/internationaltours)

*Note: A confirmed exhibition object list will be provided at a later date.*



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Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG  
[internationaltours@britishmuseum.org](mailto:internationaltours@britishmuseum.org)  
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COVER: Head ornament with a double string of beads and gold leaf-shaped pendants. From the Royal Cemetery in Ur, southern Iraq. Early Dynastic period, c. 2600 BC.  
1. Gold lunula with engraved geometric decoration. From Gwithian, Cornwall, England. Early Bronze Age, c. 2400–2000 BC. 2. Jade ring in the form of a coiled dragon. From China, Qing dynasty, 18th–19th century AD. 3. Breastplate made of black lipped pearl-shell and ivory. From Fiji, Polynesia, c. 19th century AD.