Holy sanctuary at Mecca
This 17th–18th century painting featured in the exhibition Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam. Two-dimensional views became a standard way to depict the sanctuary on Hajj certificates.
(65 x 48 cm)
For the fifth year running, the BM was the UK’s most popular visitor attraction, with 5.8 million visitors. Accolades included winning the 2011 Art Fund Prize for A History of the World – a great honour for the staff, all of whom contributed to the project, and for the many UK partners involved. To date there have been almost 28 million downloads of the radio programme worldwide. The BM will use the £100,000 prize to fund ‘spotlight tours’ around the UK. Star objects will be loaned to regional museums to help them attract larger audiences and draw attention to their own collections in new ways.

The BM now raises about half of its income from fundraising and other revenue-generating activity, with the balance coming from the government. It continues to receive this public funding to enable it to fulfil its public mission, and growing numbers of philanthropic supporters allow it to do so even more effectively.

Exhibitions at the BM drew thousands of new visitors. Haj: Journey to the Heart of Islam attracted a very different audience to previous exhibitions. Of its 140,000 visitors, two-thirds were from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) audiences. Nearly 32,000 people took part in education and learning programmes and over 13,000 schoolchildren visited the exhibition. A hugely diverse audience also attended community events, including Chinese, Turkish, Moroccan, Somali, Iraqi and Afghani visitors. The exhibition was generously supported by HSBC Amanah.

Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman, supported by AlaPartners, with Louis Vuitton, was one of the year’s artistic successes. The artist took a radical approach to the BM collection, lifting objects out of their historical or cultural categories, presenting them in a completely fresh way and creating new artworks to comment on them. The exhibition won the 2012 South Bank Sky Arts Award for visual arts.

We are grateful to BP for renewing its longstanding partnership with the BM. The result is a stimulating five-year programme of special exhibitions. In As You Like It, Shakespeare called the world ‘this wide and universal theatre’ – it was how he saw his own plays on stage at the appropriately named Globe Theatre, and it is a fitting description of the BM itself, where the BP Special Exhibition Shakespeare: Staging the World, in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company, will be staged this summer. BP is also supporting the BM’s international work, including an exhibition tour of Mummy: The Inside Story to Mumbai.

With over two million objects accessible online, the BM collection is reaching more people than ever before. An outstanding gift to the collection in 2011 was the Vollard Suite by Picasso, generously donated by Hamish Parker and presented in a special exhibition in 2012 – the first complete set of 100 prints, by common consent the most important graphic suite of the 20th century, has been shown in a public museum in Britain.

Major developments within the Museum include the new Citi Money Gallery. Opening in June 2012, it tells the 4000-year history of money. The BM’s major building development, the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre, received additional support, with a generous award of £10 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund in January 2012.

National spotlight tours are one of a number of BM initiatives to support museums across the UK. As the sector faces particular challenges with cuts in local authority funding, the BM has expanded its joint programmes to include loans, touring exhibitions, partnerships, gallery spaces and working together with regional museums to increase their visitor numbers, train staff, share skills and potentially attract new sources of income. Nearly one million additional people visited museums across the country thanks to their partnership activities with the BM. Touring exhibitions alone, with support from the Dorset Foundation, saw BM objects viewed by around half a million people in the UK outside London, and the BM’s largest ever tour, Pharaoh: King of Egypt, led to a 450% increase in visitors to the Dorset County Museum.

Internationally the BM was invited to advise on the preservation of cultural heritage in Iraq and Libya, worked with museums in Africa, and participated in a variety of international research projects: from rescue archaeology in Sudan to collaborations with Denmark and China. Among the year’s new programmes were the East Africa Programme, funded by the Getty Foundation, and a cultural leadership training scheme in India, launched in 2012 in Delhi, with further courses of study in London and Mumbai.

In the course of this year we said goodbye to five Trustees: Val Gooding, Olga Kennard, Richard Lambert, Edmée Leventis and David Norgrove, each of whom has made a very special contribution to the BM. We have also been joined by new colleagues: John Micklethwait and Martin Sorrell, from whom much is expected.

None of what the BM accomplishes would be possible without the generous support of government, our sponsors and donors, as well as the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers. On behalf of all the Trustees and the public in the UK and abroad – a heartfelt thanks.

Niall FitzGerald
Chairman of the Trustees

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To celebrate the Olympics, the Discobolus (‘Discus-Thrower’) has returned to the BM. On display in the Great Court after its tour to Japan, China, South Korea, Turkey, Taiwan, Spain and Mexico, it is one of a parade of exhibitions, books and events to mark the Olympic Games and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012.
An updated Discobolus by contemporary Chinese sculptor Sui Jianguo, Greek and Roman artefacts and designs for Olympic medals are among the BM Olympic displays this summer. Special activities include an ancient sports day for families, an Olympic Trail visitors can follow through the BM and a conference on sport in the ancient world.
Two major exhibitions this summer mark the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the World Shakespeare Festival, part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Special exhibits include the Queen’s own racing silks and paintings by George Stubbs.
In the museum

Cylinder seal, 2700–2600 bc
This seal from ancient Mesopotamia (shown with the impression it makes) was acquired in 2011/12. Its depicts lions, goats, bulls, monsters and heroes in combat. (Length 3.2 cm)
The wider influences on, and by, Europeans were also documented in new ways. A rare 15th-century Byzantine icon bequeathed to the BM depicts John the Baptist and Saint Demetrios. Two dishes of white faenza show the dominance of Italian luxury ceramics in 17th-century Germany. Abandoning Europe, Paul Gauguin sought inspiration in the Pacific, where he explored new styles and subjects, as can be seen in an 1894 watercolour monotype of two Tahitian women. The works of art by Gauguin and Tiepolo were both accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax.

Meeting Points in South Asia
In 2011, the BM was able to acquire, with the support of the Art Fund, a rare example of metalwork from Kashmir, in northwest India. The censer is in the form of a four-armed flying male figure bearing a pierced vessel above his head. Scholars have suggested that this may be Pushpadanta, the leader of the heavenly attendants who wait on the gods. He is adorned with lotuses and other flowers appropriate for a censer, which conveys sweet-smelling smoke to the image of the deity. Very few ritual bronze objects survive from medieval India, so this is an important acquisition for the BM, as well as being of outstanding quality.

Many new acquisitions are about cultural encounters. A scroll painting by contemporary Gurupada Chitrakar is one of a series showing famous Scots with links to Bengal, in this instance Patrick Geddes. Gurupada Chitrakar is a storyteller in the ancient patua tradition, and he sings the stories he depicts on the scrolls when he unrolls them in front of his audience.

Among the year’s outstanding bequests was a collection of 101 items of Indian silver. The shapes of these teapots, wine jugs, calling-card cases and other items are mostly European, and they were made in the late 19th and early 20th centuries principally for Europeans living in India who then brought them back to England. Most are from Bijnor in the princely state of Kutch. This fascinating collection includes an unusual dressing-table set packed in a travelling case and 46 drawings of silver designs.

Ziggy Stardust and the King of Kent
The BM collection records several millennia of British life. Yorkshire painter David Oxtoby donated 41 of his portraits of jazz, blues and rock musicians including David Bowie (in his glam-rock guise as Ziggy Stardust), Marc Bolan, Robert Plant and Joe Cocker. Acquisitions from earlier periods included over 500 17th-century tokens from Middlesex, purchased with support from the BM Friends; an Anglo-Saxon silver-gilt mount; and several finds from Roman Britain – two writing tablets recently excavated at Vindolanda near Hadrian’s Wall; two tiers of a mysterious bronze stand, possibly used as an incense or candle-holder; and a unique British Iron Age coin, purchased with support from the Art Fund. The gold coin names (and provides the first evidence for) a king in Kent called Anarevito, who ruled between Caesar’s invasions of Britain in 55/54 bc and the Roman conquest of AD 43.

Seals, Clothes and a Car Bonnet
The BM’s unparalleled collection from the Middle East charts the development of power relations, trade and religion over six millennia. With support from the BM Friends and the American Friends of the BM, 45 seals collected in the region by a British officer in the 1920s were recently acquired for the collection. Carved from semi-precious stones, they range from the Early Dynastic period (2600 bc) to the Neo-Babylonian period (500 bc).

From the Middle East across Africa, from the Pacific to the Americas, the BM collects culturally representative artefacts both ancient and modern. In 2011/12 donations and purchases included 75 articles of traditional clothing from ...
amateur royals to the most accomplished artists. New acquisitions in 2011/12 ranged from a monumental mixed-media painting of Kilimanjaro by South African artist Georgia Papageorge; a metal sculpture from Papua New Guinea entitled Woman with Children by Tom Deko; and a print showing three ancestral figures by Torres Strait Islander Alick Tipoti. The line of tradition can often be traced through modern works. In Hoon, Canadian artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas painted a car bonnet in Haida style. The result imitates a ‘copper’, a shield held by chiefs and ritually given during competitive exchanges of riches – just as we use cars today to boast of wealth and status.

What to Do on Holiday in Japan
When the Prince of Wales visited Nishihonganji temple in Kyoto in 1881, he decided to demonstrate his brush skills. Painting random dots across a large piece of paper, the future George V challenged the painter Kubota Beisen to make a picture. The result of this unlikely Anglo-Japanese collaboration – which Beisen transformed into a swarm of fireflies – is now a print showing a sculptor and model is one of 100 that comprise the Vollard Suite, acquired by the BM in 2011. (27 x 20 cm)

Some six months later, Stephen Coppel came into work and clicked open an email from Hamish Parker. ‘The BM should have in its possession a complete set of the Vollard Suite. From our many conversations together I realise that this is a sentiment shared by you. I’m happy to report that I am well on the way to achieving this goal and, if all goes well, a complete set, with the highest of provenance, should be in the department [of Prints and Drawings] by year end . . . I am making this donation in memory of my father who passed away last year. Although it might be going too far to suggest that he was a fan of Picasso, he certainly was a fan of the British Museum; especially anything involving education and enlightenment. To have this set in such close proximity to the Elgin marbles would be of particular delight to him.’

Worth nearly a million pounds and presented by the Hamish Parker Charitable Trust in memory of Major Horace Parker, the Vollard Suite can be seen in a special free exhibition due to open in 2014. This impressive decorative metalwork of the 5th–6th century depicts bird and monster masks. (Length 50 cm)

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spaces. The WCEC is due to open in 2014 with a special exhibition on the Vikings. Funding for the building in 2011/12 included the award of £10 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Experiments on the Move
Preparations for the BM’s new World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre (WCEC) include a major programme of collection relocations. The logistics of moving large parts of the collection into the new building requires attention to almost every aspect of conservation care, due in large part to the diversity and varying fragility of the materials. Hazards are being studied that range from the effects of vibration to the volatility of materials now deemed dangerous, both those that make up objects from around the world and those applied in past treatments.

Preparations for the WCEC have also been an opportunity to ensure that processes such as disinfection by freezing can be systematically applied to entire sections of the collection, ensuring that when they are placed in their upgraded stores, the artefacts carry the lowest risk of contamination possible.

Collaborating to Conserve Egyptian Paintings
Four portraits from Fayum in Egypt – two men and two women – were the subject of a collaboration between the BM and the National Gallery. The funerary portraits are a fascinating blend of two cultures: the portrait tradition is Roman, but the practice of painting them to cover a mummified face in burial is Egyptian.

While Ancient Egyptian funerary portraits are likelier candidates for the BM’s world collection than the National Gallery’s, two were donated to each institution by the Mond family in the early 20th century. At some point in the past, the portraits had been attached to cradle-like mounts, but the wooden panels were beginning to split and buckle, causing the painted surfaces to lift.

Though the portraits themselves are not a set, their past conservation links them and so conservators from both institutions worked together to remove the portraits from the old mounts. They stabilised them and then provided new mounts. This delicate process of conservation was also a rare opportunity for scientists from the BM and National Gallery to perform analytical work on cross-sections of these 2000-year-old works to learn more about the pigments the artists used and how the paintings were produced.

Japanese Erotic Art
Scholarship is sometimes constrained by its subject matter. ‘Spring pictures’ or shunga are erotic Japanese paintings, prints and book illustrations. The earliest appear as graffiti hidden on 7th-century Buddhist statues and they evolved across a variety of forms, including handscrolls and woodblock prints. By the 17th century, they were an accepted part of the repertoire of ukiyo-e or pictures of the floating world.

With funding from the Leverhulme Trust, the under-studied history of shunga has been the subject of a major three-year research project, in collaboration with the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto; and Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto. Topics range from histories of ownership and distribution to how the artform was inhibited by westernisation in Japan, as the country opened up in the late 19th century. A major exhibition, supported by the Tokyo Art Club, is planned for 2013 at the BM and 2014 in Tokyo.

Keeping an Eye on the Silver
‘Accelerated ageing’ is what most skincare products are trying to prevent. But as a protocol for scientific research, it is essential. To judge the influence of materials used in display cases on the objects they support, studies at the BM exaggerate the conditions in which such materials operate, in order to get a sense of what the cumulative effect will be over time. In 2011, experiments into the effect of certain foams on sterling and pure silver showed that over varying periods, some were not only benign but in fact helped to reduce corrosion by scavenging sulphide gases (which cause silver to tarnish) from the surrounding environment.

This was just one of many experiments the department carried out in 2011/12 on a range of substances. The results are used to support the care and presentation of the collection, and are shared among colleagues internationally through conferences, lectures, media coverage, online publications and journals, including the BM’s own annual Technical Research Bulletin.

Hermes Back on his Pedestal
Fragments of a classical statue of the god Hermes – a first century AD Roman copy of a Greek original – were successfully reconstructed in 2011. The final result drew on both scientific and curatorial research, combining X-ray analysis with a study of old images of the object. On long-term loan to the BM from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the 2.1m-high male figure had
been heavily restored in the 18th century. The original marble and that used in the restoration were closely matched, so scientific investigation was required to identify what was original. Minero-petrographic and scanning electron microscopic analyses were carried out on four samples. Scientists identified two different marbles, one dolomitic, which was used for the original parts, and the other calcitic, which was employed for the restored components.

Photographs enabled the BM to identify the plinth that had been used to display the statue in the 19th century and the two have now, after several decades’ severance, been reunited. The beautiful figure of Hermes will go on display in the BM as part of its Olympic Trail in 2012.

### Four Centuries of Spanish Prints and Drawings

In the BM collection, they range from a simple playing card of the Spanish Renaissance to Goya’s portrait of the Duke of Wellington. With funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the BM is exploring the largely uncharted territory of the origins and development of Spanish prints and drawings, a subject little studied outside of Spain.

The research project looks at the history of Spanish graphic arts from around 1400 to the time of Goya in the early 19th century – including architectural prints, religious subjects, landscapes and even fans. One critical aspect is to consider the presence of foreign artists working in Spain and how they contributed to the artistic landscape. Research in Spanish collections has led to significant discoveries about artists and works associated with the BM’s own prints.

New acquisitions will support a major exhibition in 2012/13. They include a pen-and-wash cartoon of embroideries to decorate vestments in the Escorial monastery and an exquisitely drawn 17th-century male nude by Valencian artist Juan Antonio Conchillos y Falcó.

### Unknown Dyes from the Andes

Our knowledge of European dyes is extensive: what they are made of, how they operate chemically and how they endure. But we know far less of dyestuffs from the rest of the world, as until recently they have been much less studied. With a major grant from the Leverhulme Trust, the BM is pioneering research into Andean textiles and in particular, the natural dyes used to produce them.

The programme is multidisciplinary, with colleagues from Paris, Madrid and Peru engaged in fieldwork in South America gathering plants and other raw materials and examining traditional dyeing practices, knowledge which is at risk of disappearing in the modern age.

The study is wide-ranging, and will raise complex questions: from the effect of the environment on colour longevity to the impact of local resources on colour choice and its cultural significance. Not least among the benefits will be improvements in the long-term care and preservation of fragile textiles across the world.

### Ratting Bracelets from Oman

What we know about artefacts is a complex business. Imported materials may reveal the presence of trade and cultural contact. Dirt or wear on objects can tell us how they were used. Living makers may have knowledge of methods employed in the past.

A wonderful collection of Omani silver jewellery at the BM has recently been studied with just such a combination of approaches. Acquired in 2009, the 240 pieces are in a tradition of handmade jewellery that reaches back to the mid-19th century at least. The BM’s is the largest public collection of Omani silver in Europe, and all the more significant as the region’s silver jewellery is now in decline. Omani women today generally prefer gold.

Some materials can be identified historically – much of the silver was melted down from imported coins such as Maria Theresa thalers and Indian rupees. Sometimes thalers, rupees and Saudi rials were used as decorative pendants on Omani necklaces, signalling the wealth of the owner and also acting as portable bank accounts. An elaborate child’s necklace of chains, embossed disks and a Qur’an-case amulet incorporates a wolf’s tooth and carnelian stone to ward off illness, poverty and the evil eye.

Scientific analysis explained much more. X-radiography showed that the varying rattles you could hear in hollow bracelets and anklets were caused by the different materials hidden inside: metal and glass beads and stone fragments. Backscattered electron materials revealed tool marks. X-ray fluorescence determined the composition of solder and gilding. Speaking to makers in Oman, BM staff learned exactly how the chains, gilding and stamped designs they could observe were in fact produced. Further fieldwork in Oman is planned, to gather as much information as possible while we still can about this rich tradition of Arabian jewellery-making.
At the museum

The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman, 2011

Grayson Perry’s award-winning exhibition concluded with this long iron ship incorporating artefacts based on the BM collection. (3 x 2 m)
Exhibitions

Spiritual journeys have been the focus of a series of popular exhibitions at the BM in recent years: the afterlife in Ancient Egypt, the veneration of saints in medieval Europe, a tomb for the works of unknown craftsmen, and most recently, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. Such displays use the collection and loans to tell stories through things, in all their rich particularity.

Out Front for the Outback of Australia

The Forecourt in front of the BM was the heart of the 2011 Australian Season, supported by Rio Tinto. Australia Landscape: Kew at the British Museum was the fourth of the annual world landscapes planted in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. A great favourite with summer visitors, the Australian landscape featured Tea trees and eucalypts, Kurrajongs and the evergreen Kangaroo Paw. 90% of Australian plants are found only in Australia.

A popular programme of Australian music, films, talks and craft workshops was linked to two exhibitions. Baskets and Belonging: Indigenous Australian Histories used a remarkable collection of baskets to trace the history of Aboriginal Australian communities, notably since British settlement. Out of Australia: Prints and Drawings from Sidney Nolan to Rover Thomas focused on Australia’s major artists of the past 70 years. The exhibition – the largest devoted to Australian works on paper ever held outside Australia – drew on the BM collection, including works by the ‘Angry Penguins’ Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd in the 1940s and others. The collection has grown through generous gifts to the BM in recent years, including striking prints by leading Aboriginal artists Rover Thomas and Pedro Wonaeamirri, given by Gordon and Marilyn Darling. Over 170,000 people visited the two shows, and their success prompted further important gifts to the collection, including eight additional Back of Beyond drawings by Sidney Nolan, given by his widow Mary Nolan, and a work by former Bauhaus artist Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack, given by Julia Schottlander. This poignant woodcut was created during Mack’s internment with other German-Jewish refugee artists classified by the British government as ‘enemy aliens’ and deported to Australia.

Gilding to Glorify Heaven’s Saints

“This exhibition is as historically intricate, as imaginatively resonant and as gloriously evocative as the objects that it displays,” judged The Times. It awarded five stars to Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe, sponsored by John Studzinski, in association with William and Judith Bollinger, Singapore; Betsy and Jack Ryan; Howard and Roberta Ahmanson; and The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation.

For three months, relics and medieval reliquaries of Christian saints – among them rare loans from the Sancta Sanctorum, the private chapel of the popes in the Lateran Palace, and lesser-known treasures from European churches – were brought together in the Round Reading Room. The veneration of holy relics was reflected in their elaborately crafted receptacles: a wooden head of St Eustace covered in a silver-gilt shell adorned with rock crystal, amethyst and pearls;
architectural reliquaries of astonishing detail, their niches filled with the tiny figures of saints; reliquary crosses and pendants and votive plaques painted, bejewelled and gilded. As the Evening Standard concluded, ‘the British Museum’s summer exhibition Treasures of Heaven is an astonishing accumulation of these things, beautifully displayed, the soaring dome of the Reading Room seeming suitably ecclesiastical.’ Over 75,000 visitors attended.

Art from Japan to Germany
Leading Japanese manga artist Hoshino Yukinobu translated the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon sculptures, Benin bronzes, even the BM building itself, into a popular modern medium. Manga at the BM was a display of his drawings that coincided with the English-language publication of Professor Munakata’s British Museum Adventure. The graphic art of manga has a global following, and Hoshino’s dramatically drawn adventure set in the BM, first published in Japan, has now catapulted the BM and its collection to the attention of this worldwide audience of manga fans.

Landscape, Heroes and Folktales: German Romantic Prints and Drawings, supported by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, took a visual tour through the age of Goethe, Schubert and Hegel. Germany’s cultural flowering in the late 18th and early 19th centuries saw artists looking back to Dürer and Raphael while at the same time developing an interest in Germanic history and legends. The new technique of lithography, invented in Munich, played a central role in the representation of northern landscapes. The centerpiece of the show was The Four Times of Day by Philipp Otto Runge, its allegories of earthly and heavenly love fundamental expressions of German Romantic thought.

Art from the Middle East featured in several displays in the Islamic galleries, including art from Herat, Afghanistan; modern Syrian art; and the responses of young Saudi artists to the Hajj.

BM Celebrates the Unnamed Craftsman
Winner of the 2012 South Bank Sky Arts Award for Visual Arts, the exhibition Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman, supported by AlixPartners, with Louis Vuitton, was a tribute to the world’s unknown makers – those artists we cannot name, but who for thousands of years have created some of the most potent artefacts known to mankind, works which fill the BM. Artist Grayson Perry’s ‘tomb’ was an imaginative repository of objects that he had selected as he spent two years exploring the furthest reaches of the BM collection – fragments of Roman cameos, Japanese playing cards, Our Mother, 2009
For Grayson Perry’s cultural pilgrimage, he created this powerful cast-iron figure. (Height 85 cm)
Manga at the BM
Drawings by Hoshino Yukinobu, later published as books in Japanese and English, made the BM the setting for a manga adventure.
I too was in Arcadia, 1801
This etching by Carl Wilhelm Kolbe featured in the exhibition on German Romantic prints. (41 x 53 cm)
phallus-hugging statues, Aztec painting, an Asafo flag from Ghana. Set among them were his own creative responses: a bright yellow and blue Rosetta vase; a pilgrim badge showing his teddy bear on horseback; a powerful bronze skull studded with nails; a coffin for his ponytail; and as the climax, a cast-iron ship three metres long he called The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman. With generous assistance from private supporters and the BM Friends, three of the works were acquired for the collection.

‘A walk around my head’ was how Perry described the exhibition, and 118,000 visitors were happy to walk alongside him. The Telegraph found it ‘entertaining and unexpectedly touching’; the Observer an ‘exhilarating celebration’. For Howard Jacobson writing in the Independent, it was quite simply: ‘The best exhibition by a contemporary artist I’ve seen in years.’

Taking it One Object at a Time

Objects in Focus: The Asahi Shimbun Displays are a series of changing displays that explore a single object. Background Story 7 by renowned Chinese artist Xu Bing was an installation made especially for the BM. Seen from the front, the tall panel had the appearance of a traditional Chinese ink landscape painting, but as visitors walked round the back, they were astonished to find the image was in fact created by shadows cast from three-dimensional objects: dried plants, hemp fibre and paper placed in a light box. The work attracted international press attention. Later displays explored a crocodile dance mask from the Torres Strait Islands; Hokusai’s print ‘The Great Wave’; and an olive-wood model of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Displays throughout the BM included an intriguing comparison of the cost of living in Roman and modern Britain and (as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad) Mine to Medals: The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Medals, supported by Rio Tinto.

The Journey of a Lifetime

‘An exhibition of profound cultural importance has just opened at the British Museum,’ announced the Evening Standard. The newspaper was reviewing Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam, presented in partnership with King Abdulaziz Public Library. The exhibition was generously supported by HSBC Amanah.

The exhibition caught hold of a hunger in the public to know more about the Hajj. BBC Radio 3’s Night Waves remarked that ‘the star of the show is an idea’ – what it means to make the holy pilgrimage to Mecca that all Muslims must try to do at least once in their lifetime, if they are able. Archaeological material, textiles and manuscripts, historical photographs and contemporary artworks, gifts taken as offerings and souvenirs brought home – all were brought together to convey the routes, rituals and richness of an experience that draws together Muslims from across the world, regardless of nationality or sect. The exhibition also incorporated the experiences of UK Muslims, recorded with funding from the AHRC. Hajj attracted 20,000 visitors in its first month. In total, 140,000 people attended, including over 13,000 school visits.

‘This is one of the most brilliant exhibitions the British Museum has put on,’ summed up the Guardian. The BM’s goal is for such exhibitions to engender debate, as this one did, not least among commentators in the Sunday Times, TLS and New Statesman who raised concerns about the destruction of historical religious sites around Mecca. Yet with 2.5 million Muslims in the UK and a quarter of the world’s population practising Islam, it was a good idea to understand ‘the faith that made them travel so far,’ argued the Independent. ‘This journey, round this museum, which makes you think of all the journeys human beings have ever made, is a very, very, very good place to start.’

Water flask, 19th century Chinese porcelain exported to the Middle East was used to carry water from the spring of Zamzam at Mecca. (Height 23 cm)

Magnetism, 2011

This powerful image by Saudi artist Ahmed Mater uses a magnet and iron filings to evoke images of the Hajj. (63 x 42 cm)

Seven Times (detail), 2010

British artist Idris Khan’s 144 oil-sealed steel cubes inscribed with prayers were inspired by his father’s Hajj.
An iconic building, an online resource, an
authority on history – the BM is many things
today. But for many, the BM is a place of activity
– of schools programmes and adult learning, of
children’s sleepovers and hands-on creativity,
of public discussion and political debate. All
support the BM’s aim to bring the past to life
and share its importance to how we live today.

Dancing, Painting, Carving, Listening
Just another day at the museum? Assyrian lions
still standing guard. Gold from Sutton Hoo
glimting mysteriously. The Lewis chessmen
longing to go out and play.
In 2011/12 at the BM, visitors did the
following: tweeted haikus into cyberspace; heard
a virtuoso rubab player from Afghanistan; carved
miniature caskets of soapstone; made transvestite
mummies with students from London’s University
of the Arts; filled their lungs to blow a note on
the didjeridu; learned to sink, planish and punch
pewter in the style of Omani silver; painted tiny
illuminations like manuscripts from medieval
Europe. More than 500 children and adults
learned and performed dances from the
Middle Ages.

What drives the BM’s thousands of activities
for the public each year is an ambition to animate
history, to give objects from the past a living
presence. If the BM/BBC Radio 4 hit A History of the World in 100 Objects gave voice to some of the collection’s hidden stories, participatory events at the BM offer insight into other cultural connections – not just with artistry and craft, but with the very habits of world civilisations and peoples out of which the entire collection arose.

Scholarship, Politics and Debate
From film screenings to political lectures, the platforms to present world culture at the BM attract a variety of audiences. A day of film documentaries ranged from Tunisia to Toneth. Rashid Khalidi, Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University, spoke on human dignity in Jerusalem in the annual Edward Said London lecture. Free lunch-hour talks covered topics as diverse as climate change; the spread of HIV; Greek sculpture and the modern male body; and how the science of investigating pigments helps us to date and conserve fragile artefacts, while an Open University study day used the collection to teach world arts and Collaborative courses with Birkbeck College objects such as the Lindisfarne Gospels.

Digital Discovery Centre, where you could take a compass to travel the Arab world; or Samurai sword demonstrations. As with the schools programme, many take place in the Samsung Digital Discovery Centre, where you could take your teddy time-travelling (inspired by Grayson Perry) or mash up digital images of animals in the BM collection to create a T-shirt transfer of your own mismatched creature.

Cultures in Contact was a three-year project funded by Deutsche Bank and supported by its staff as volunteers. Working with entire year groups from four London comprehensive schools, the team explored different time periods, using digital and other resources to encourage the students to investigate both the BM and their own singular or mixed cultural heritage. The programme has been a huge success.

Reaching Diverse Communities
To mark the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, over 2000 people attended a Bangladesh Family Day in September 2011. Modern Bangladeshi works of art were displayed, as were brightly painted rickshaw panels, a typical feature of the streets of Dhaka today. Storytellers spun tales of the watery lands of the Bengal Delta, alongside dancers and performers, film screenings and lectures, gallery tours and community art activities. Many from London's Bangladeshi community were first-time visitors to the BM.

Community events adapt the BM programme to specific groups: the elderly, the vulnerable, the hard-to-reach. Multi-sensory walks through the summer's Australia Landscape in the Forecourt were designed for the blind. In association with the charity Kids Company, 83 vulnerable children enjoyed a treasure hunt and sleepover at the BM.

Talking Objects, a BM programme supported by John Lyon's Charity in London and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation nationally, focuses activities around single BM objects. A Sikh youth group used creative writing to explore a fortress turban, while young people from Sierra Leone worked with a helmet mask. Other approaches included the use of puppets and theatre to overcome inhibitions in approaching museum collections.

BMuse, the BM's youth panel, celebrated the BM's 240th anniversary with an open day, inviting other youth groups to see films made as part of the programme, which is now extending its reach across the UK.

Joining In
One way of accessing the BM is by contributing. Many donate generously to the collection and its programmes; others volunteer their time and expertise. Nearly 900 volunteers support...
the entire range of the BM’s work. Many of the 320,000 prints now accessible worldwide at high-resolution on the BM website were scanned by volunteers; museum outreach to elderly people and their carers as part of the Shared Experience programme is conducted by volunteers; popular object-handling desks and tours at the BM are run by volunteers.

Over 40,000 BM Friends, including over 1500 Young Friends, are also avid supporters. Adult Members enjoyed an extensive programme of exclusive Members’ evenings offering talks, tours and hands-on displays. A day of Norse activities for the Young Friends saw the ‘Sleeping Army’ of Lewis chessmen brought to life, while boat-building and storytelling were among the imaginative games for a December sleepover inspired by Grayson Perry and his teddy bear.

A new Members’ Room overlooking the Great Court opens in 2012.

Haji: Journey to the Heart of Islam

Saudi Ambassador Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Charles and BM Director Neil MacGregor attend the opening. The exhibition attracted 140,000 visitors.

Journeys for Everyone

The BM holds free previews of major exhibitions to build relationships with local communities. Audiences which rarely (or never) visit are encouraged through outreach and individual contact to come to the BM and reminded that it belongs to them.

Each one increases in scale: over 300 people attended a community preview for Grayson Perry and for Haji: Journey to the Heart of Islam, over 870 people responded, the largest community preview ever held at the BM. The groups ranged from the Southwark Muslim Women’s Association to the Cromer Street Mosque to the East London Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association. Some were first-time visitors, others were making return visits, including Turkish, Moroccan, Somali, African-Caribbean, Bengali, Iraqi, Chinese and Afghan groups. Representatives of more than 80 groups attended, including refugee support groups, youth groups, local charities, neighbourhood centres and resource centres for the elderly. At its most effective, the reach extends beyond the BM’s points of contact: members of one local community garden group who work with the BM invited Muslim neighbours to visit the exhibition as a gesture in community building.

The project curator introduced the exhibition, highlighting key themes and exhibits. As one participant wrote, the visit to the BM with so many different groups ‘is so welcome, and provides an opportunity for us to be together and get to know one another more closely’.

In the months prior to the opening, the BM also launched an online campaign to gather the personal stories that make up the modern-day Hajj. The result has been a growing website of contributions – some written, some on video – that describe what it means to people of very different backgrounds and circumstances to make the trip to Mecca. ‘Our Hajj group travelled to Mecca,’ wrote one, ‘and my first sight of the Ka’aba was humbling, I felt that I was at the centre of the universe, a particle in the heavenly dance, drinking in the honey air, swimming in endless oceans of Mercy.’
Piecing together the past
Finds such as these fragments of a Greek drinking cup of 575–560 bc were dispersed after excavations at Naukratis in northern Egypt. They are being reunited as part of a major research project.
The BM’s national and international presence is supported by film, radio, television and publications. The BM online is an important focus, providing new types of access to the collection, research and events. With increasing digital participation, the BM is bringing people from around the world into its cultural conversation.

**A History of the World wins the Art Fund Prize**
The BM/BBC Radio 4 series *A History of the World in 100 Objects* continued its international success in 2011/12. The overall programme, including events and displays with 550 museums around the UK, won the 2011 Art Fund Prize for ‘Museum of the Year’.

Michael Portillo, chair of the judges, said: ‘We were particularly impressed by the truly global scope of the British Museum’s project, which combined intellectual rigour and open-heartedness, and went far beyond the boundaries of the museum’s walls. Above all, we felt that this project, which showed a truly pioneering use of digital media, has led the way for museums to interact with their audiences in new and different ways. Without changing the core of the British Museum’s purpose, people have and are continuing to engage with objects in an innovative way as a consequence of this project.’

The 100-part radio series journeyed across the world's cultures, starting with a two-million-year-old stone chopping tool and finishing with a solar-powered lamp made in 2010. It was rebroadcast on BBC Radio 4 Extra, and in 2012 was broadcast in the USA on New York-based WNYC, part of the National Public Radio group. There have been over 27.5 million downloads of the series worldwide.

The book is being published in ten countries including Russia, China, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Spain. It has already appeared in the USA, and in Dutch and German translations, earning enthusiastic reviews. As *Die Welt* put it, ‘Man liest dieses lehrreiche Buch mit Staunen und Vergnügen. Ein famoses Werk’ (‘A learned book you read with amazement and amusement. A splendid opus’). The two British editions became the top-selling history book in the UK for the period, selling over 220,000 copies. It has sold over 350,000 copies worldwide.

A new BM/BBC Radio 4 collaboration was recorded in 2011/12 for broadcast in April and May 2012. In *Shakespeare’s Restless World*, BM Director Neil MacGregor explores the political, religious and social debates at the heart of Shakespeare’s world, when the globe was first circumnavigated and public theatres like the Globe in Southwark first emerged.
**Film, Television, Radio and Spies**  
TV and radio production teams visit the BM from across the world. In 2011/12 the BM reached at least 300 million people through broadcasts by the BBC, Channel 4, ITV, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, HISTORY and Sky, as well as global broadcasting companies NBC America, Munhwa (South Korea), CCTV (China) and companies from across Europe. Location filming for advertisements and feature films saw the BM appear in a popular Chinese romantic comedy, *Dear Enemy*, while the BM’s west London storage facility, shared with the V&A and Science Museum, had a starring role in *West London*, a film set in west London.

To encourage wider access online, British Sign Language videos on 200 highlighted objects, first created for the BM’s Multimedia Guide, are now available on the website.

**Digital Campaigns**  
With each new exhibition, the BM finds new ways of engaging visitors. Different approaches to communicating with the public enable digital media to play an increasing role in how people ‘visit’ the BM.

The hunt for a teddy bear stunt double was a first for the BM. Grayson Perry’s exhibition opened with his Kenilworth AM1 motorcycle, at the back of which is a special space for his childhood teddy bear, Alan Measles. Perry and the BM launched online campaign to find three stunt doubles to perch there during the exhibition. A video appeal by the artist was uploaded on the BM website and communicated through the BM’s social media channels including Facebook and Twitter, alongside significant coverage in the national media. Over 4000 people viewed the video and thousands ‘liked’ the competition and tweeted about it. Of nearly 300 applicants (with bear CVs attached), 12 finalists faced a public vote on the BM website, with the winning three teddy bears – Pinny, Dr Schmoo and Ted – having their moment of fame on Perry’s motorbike displayed in the BM.

**Web and Social Media**  
An increasingly large public is reached via Facebook, Twitter and other social media. Followers on Twitter (94,000) increased by 92%, and ‘likes’ on Facebook (182,000) doubled, with over half coming from those between the ages of 18 and 34.

The BM’s web presence now includes a blog which sit on an increasing number of platforms, primarily the BM website and YouTube. One showed the Australian landscape being planted in the BM Forecourt, another the meticulous construction of a work by Chinese artist Xu Bing. Over 50,000 viewers watched a short promotional video for the *Hajj* exhibition in its first two weeks.

The BM also commissions its own web videos, including footage commissioned by the BM, BBC’s *Imagine* followed artist Grayson Perry as he unearthed extraordinary objects from the collection. Television tie-ins included BBC4’s *Treasures of Heaven*, with Andrew Graham-Dixon, and a documentary on *The Hidden Art of Islam*. Using documentary on *The Hidden Art of Islam*. Using

**Online Collections and Research**  
The BM’s collection online now receives on average 1.5 million page views per month—an astonishing resource for public knowledge and communication. On 19 July 2011, the Documentation Section added its two millionth digital record – a tiny silver coin from the Hoxne Hoard, one of 15,000 Roman coins discovered in Suffolk in 1992. Significant additions included digitising the Townley drawings associated with the BM’s important historical collection on ancient Greece and Rome. New research pages online included two major projects funded by the Leverhulme Trust: *Money in Africa* and *Andean textiles*.

In 2011, the BM released a Semantic Web version of the database, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, that provides access to the same website data, but in a specific computer-readable format. Using the open-data standard RDF, it can be used to link the BM’s collection...
The British Museum Review 2011/12

The BM is an international centre of scholarship. It brings together experts in diverse disciplines to produce the most comprehensive research possible. In 2011 staff published more than 320 books and articles, while independent researchers consulted over 227,000 objects at the BM. Essays, books and public talks by BM staff ranged from a lecture on Andean studies (given in Stirling) to an article on zones of war and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Scholarly honours for BM staff included assistant keeper Marion Archibald being awarded the Medal of the Royal Numismatics Society.

From encouraging the public to report archaeological finds to training young museum professionals, the BM runs a range of nationwide programmes. Objects from the collection are loaned to museums and galleries across Britain and the BM offers support in conservation, research and public programming.

Training the Nation’s Future Curators

With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the BM’s Future Curators programme trains high-calibre entrants to the sector. Trainees spend six months on placement at the BM and a further year at a partner museum in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester or Newcastle. Combining formal training with on-the-job experience, the participants acquire knowledge of collections, a range of curatorial and transferable skills, and a network of valuable professional contacts. For its initial five places, the BM received 700 applications, while phase 2 had more than 1500 applicants.

Sharing expertise nationally ranges from academic research to summer schools held at the BM. A ‘truck art’ project in Luton saw the BM offer loans and support contact between Museums Luton and the National Museum in Pakistan. The BM also works with amateur archaeologists.
and the general public. Members of the Chiseldon community and local history society were able to visit the BM studios to witness close-up the conservation of 11 Iron Age cauldrons excavated near their village in Wiltshire. Facilities in the new World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre will enable the BM to extend training and collaborations for greater numbers across the UK.

**BM Displays from Ulster to Stornaway**

National tours of BM exhibitions show the collection to audiences around the country. A new BM tour, *Warriors of the Plains*, took powwow regalia and medicine shields to Lotherton Hall, Leeds, the first of four UK venues. In Northern Ireland, at the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, the Plains Indian display was of particular interest set against the museum’s own indigenous material from North America. Media coverage included a discussion on BBC Radio Ulster.

Longstanding tours met with continuing success. *The Lewis Chessmen: Unmasked* was seen by 20,000 visitors in Stornaway on the Isle of Lewis – a number nearly as large as the entire population of the Outer Hebrides. Ancient Greek pottery showing athletes, heroes and warriors could be seen in Luton; revolutionary Mexican prints in Newcastle; and works by Toulouse-Lautrec in Cardiff; the final venue in a tour viewed by 90,000 visitors. Tours were supported, among others, by the Dorset Foundation and Monument Trust.

The record for attendance at a UK tour for the BM is *China: Journey to the East*, supported by BP, a CHINA NOW legacy project: 100 objects, 3000 years of Chinese history, 400,000 UK visitors so far. The hugely popular display was seen in Manchester before continuing to Sheffield in December 2011.

**Partnership Galleries**

In June 2011, the Roman Frontier gallery was opened in Carlisle by BM Director Neil MacGregor. It tells the story of the Roman Empire’s northernmost frontier. Tullie House Museum’s historical location near Hadrian’s Wall makes it an ideal venue to display loans from the BM collection of material from Ancient Rome. It is hoped the new gallery will boost annual visitor numbers to more than 300,000.

A redisplay of the Buddha Gallery at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was launched by BM Trustee Karen Armstrong. Rare artefacts from the BM were loaned to support the gallery’s own collection. Blessed by a monk from Birmingham’s Buddhist Vihara, they include a golden Buddha from Tibet, a magnificent Hindu shrine model as well as works from Burma and Sri Lanka.

BM staff also worked with the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford to advise on the conservation and display of painted wooden coffins from Ancient Egypt. This was to support the opening of major new Egyptian and Nubian galleries at the Ashmolean in November 2011.

**Easter Island Blows into Liverpool**

Weighing 2.5 tonnes, *Moai Hau* is the smaller of the BM’s two Easter Island statues. The powerful basalt figure, thought to commemorate a Polynesian chief, is a major long-term loan to the World Museum in Liverpool, where it is now a prominent feature in the museum atrium and a significant draw for local visitors.

Loans from the BM support permanent galleries and exhibitions across the UK. In 2011/12 the BM sent Tongan baskets made of vegetable fibre to East Anglia; a statue of Nefertiti to Oxford; a Bronze Age gold necklace in the shape of a crescent moon to Penzance; and to Yorkshire, a superb watercolour of Wakefield by J.M.W. Turner, as part of the inaugural display of the BM’s two Easter Island statues. The high Easter Island statue is the smaller of the BM’s two Easter Island statues. The powerful basalt figure, thought to commemorate a Polynesian chief, is a major long-term loan to the World Museum in Liverpool, where it is now a prominent feature in the museum atrium and a significant draw for local visitors.

**National loans**

The collection was seen across the UK – from Roman jewellery displayed in Wales to a 1.6 metre-high Easter Island statue on long-term loan in Liverpool.

**A Viking Hoard and other UK Finds**

The BM’s Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a nationwide project to record archaeological finds made by the public. In 2011, there was a 7.7% rise in reported finds (97,509), while reported Treasure increased by 13% (970). With nearly half a million visitors accessing the PAS database, it won the Best of the Web award for research and online collections at the 2011 Museums and the Web conference.

Recording over 750,000 objects, the database is increasingly a resource for research on archaeology in England and Wales, and in 2011, a major grant from the Leverhulme Trust was awarded to study PAS as a tool for archaeological research.

In 2011, over 1400 public activities – club visits, finds days, rallies and talks – raised the profile of PAS across the UK. Over 50,000 people attended. A Finds Day at Arundel Castle was filmed for ITV, while 72 PAS events were...
Finds brought in for expert evaluation included a striking Roman glass intaglio. Among the year’s other important finds was a 13th-century seal showing the Virgin and Child. It was made for the Augustinian Priory at Stone in Staffordshire and its finder has loaned it to be displayed locally.

The key to PAS’s success is its nationwide network of Finds Liaison Officers, who record reported finds and organise outreach events. Thanks to the generosity of the Headley Trust, funding has been made available to fund PAS interns until 2013/14.

Most notable of the year’s discoveries was a Viking hoard. It was found at Silverdale in Lancashire in September 2011 and included the coin of a hitherto unknown Viking ruler. The 201 silver objects included arm and finger rings, wire braid, brooch fragments and coins, all preserved in a folded lead container and buried underground around AD 900.

Roman Cavalry Helmet Back on Parade

“This was one of the most challenging and rewarding projects of my career,” said BM conservator Marilyn Hockey. In 2001, archaeologists and volunteers at Hallaton in Leicestershire unearthed what looked like a rusty bucket. It turned out to be a magnificent 2000-year-old Roman officer’s helmet. BM conservators have now restored it, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and it was unveiled to the public in January 2012.

The helmet received significant media coverage. Nothing like it has ever been found in Britain. Lifted from the ground in its soil block, the hundreds of fragile fragments were painstakingly removed, stabilised and reconstructed. Astonishingly, most of the silver-gilt on the flashy cavalry helmet, if tarnished, was still intact, and the decoration includes a victory wreath, a woman flanked by lions and a Roman Emperor on horseback towering over a defeated figure below.

Research continues, as historians try to decide whether it was an offering to a local shrine, plundered from a Roman camp or possibly a gift to a Briton serving in the Roman cavalry.

Acquired by Leicestershire County Council, the helmet is on permanent display at Harborough Museum. Marilyn Hockey was proud to see it there: ‘It’s wonderful to be able to coax something like this out of the soil and to allow it to show itself off again.’
Pharaoh Draws Crowds Across the UK

‘British Museum handsomely fulfils its duties outside London,’ ran the Guardian headline. The article was about Pharaoh: King of Egypt, the largest UK touring exhibition ever undertaken by the BM. ‘It’s great to be able to see such treasures in Newcastle,’ wrote Alan Sykes, ‘displayed in a way which is accessible to all without being crudely populist . . . the Great North Museum managers must have been delighted with rain on St Swithin’s Day to ensure this is the blockbuster it deserves to be.’

A colossal statue of Ramesses II from about 1250 BC; a winged scarab inlaid with carnelian, feldspar and lapis lazuli; a papyrus showing the teaching of King Amenemhat – these were among the 130 objects loaned from the BM Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, which houses the largest collection of Egyptian artefacts outside Egypt, from the Neolithic period (about 10,000 BC) to the 12 century AD. In partnership with the BM, the show was curated by the Great North Museum, the first of six UK venues. It attracted 55,000 visitors in 21 days in Newcastle, with a final attendance of 155,000.

The next venue was surprisingly different. Selected by competition to find a museum where the show might have the greatest impact locally, the much smaller Dorset County Museum was transformed by the show. It attracted new funding and sponsorship, increased its press coverage, and was able to improve its building. Visitor numbers rose from 6000 to over 26,000, with spending in the museum rising by 520%. ‘It has had a long-term impact on us,’ said executive director Jon Murden, ‘raising our standards and . . . our profile and we very grateful to the British Museum.’

The artefacts also featured in the Sunday Express as they were being safely packed in the BM before heading off on tour. Pharaoh: King of Egypt continues to Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow and Bristol.

The BM maintains ties across the globe.

Interpreting and using the collection internationally is part of its cultural project to exchange ideas and expertise worldwide. Work abroad extends to sharing skills with other countries, supporting their cultural work, lending objects, touring exhibitions and undertaking archaeological research.

Masterclasses for Future Leaders in Indian Museums

In January 2012, in partnership with India’s Ministry of Culture and National Culture Fund, the BM launched a cultural leadership programme. Twenty participants from across India were selected for intensive training with BM staff, covering the range of museum leadership skills needed today – from strategic planning and change management to conservation and display. The three modules in Delhi, London and Mumbai will aim to develop future leaders in the museum sector, capable of achieving high cultural impact (with the various social and economic benefits that may bring) in their local areas.

The BM ties with India are longstanding, and include British Academy-funded research into archaeological research. Projects with India are just some of the many international training and research partnerships worldwide. A staff exchange with the Shanghai Museum saw a visiting curator work with a BM curator and conservators to take rubbings from ancient Chinese bronzes in the BM, while a memorandum of understanding signed in December 2011 with the National Museum of Denmark and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek saw over 100 scientists and conservators visit the BM to form a unique research consortium combining medieval history, classical archaeology, scientific research and conservation.

International Training Programme

‘I was amazed by how small ideas can be used to fundraise,’ wrote Kenyan curator Sahara Dahir Ibrahim. ‘For example, the butterfly exhibition at the Great North Museum in Newcastle, where people will pay donations and have their names on butterfly drawings put on the walls. I have introduced a similar initiative in Nairobi.’

The BM’s highly successful International Training Programme, funded by a range of
private donors, invites museum professionals at various stages of their careers to the UK. They visit the BM and spend time at museums across Britain. The goal is to expose them to the best, most exciting museum practices today, from technical skills in conservation to ideas for access and learning, such as running object-handling events for adults and children. Trainees also share their own expertise with each other, and with participating museums.

In 2011, 22 trainees from 11 countries took part, from China, Egypt, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, Palestine, Sudan, Turkey and (for the first time) Afghanistan and Brazil. ‘It made me think,’ wrote Jana Alaraj, ‘of how I can use galleries, museums and exhibitions as a relief for these people to . . . make them more happy and relaxed and positive about their life in Palestine.’

Africa Programme

The BM is extensively involved with museums in Africa. In June 2011 the BM’s Africa Programme received a grant from the Getty Foundation to deliver a three-year training project in East Africa. Workshops in core museum skills – collections care, preventive conservation, exhibitions and education – will be offered to staff in the national museums of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The aim is to create a network of dedicated museum professionals in both national and regional museums. Delivered by a joint team of BM staff and East African colleagues, the programme will foster long-term commitment to heritage in East Africa.

With support from the Ford Foundation, the BM delivered workshops at the Armed Forces Museum in Kumase, Ghana, and at the National Museum Lagos, Nigeria. ‘Developing and Using a Teaching Collection’ helped participants to explore new techniques for engaging their audiences with museum collections. Staff from 20 museums in Ghana and Nigeria participated and each museum acquired a teaching collection as part of the workshop activity.

Other activities in Africa included support for an exhibition at the National Museum of Sierra Leone to celebrate the country’s 50th anniversary of independence, and a series of textile training workshops for staff from across museums in Nigeria to support the installation of a major exhibition, *African Lace*, in collaboration with Nigeria’s National Commission for Museums and Monuments and the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna. BM Trustee and former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Chief Anyaoku, attended the opening of the exhibition in Lagos.
Middle East Museums
The Zayed National Museum (ZNM) will tell the story of Abu Dhabi, the history of the United Arab Emirates and the legacy of their founding statesman, Sheikh Zayed. Part of the new Saadiyat Island complex, ZNM is a completely new museum, and the BM is advising on many aspects of its operations, from collections and acquisitions to gallery development and public programming. Displays will include the latest archaeology from the region, where recent finds have proved groundbreaking. Reported in the journal Science, stone tools found at Jebel Faya provide the earliest evidence for the migration of modern humans out of Africa 125,000 years ago and new evidence of a route via Arabia.

Other work in the region included support for Iraq, where the Lakeside Palace is being refurbished to house the Basra Museum; joint research on Sasanian coins in the UAE and Iran; and two UNESCO projects: cataloguing Islamic glass in the Suleymaniyah Museum in Iraqi Kurdistan, and meeting to discuss the preservation of Libya’s cultural heritage, including a conservation project at the museum in Cyrene.

Overseas Exhibitions and Loans
BM touring exhibitions allow people around the world to see the collection. The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece opened in Japan on the day of earthquake. In spite of the tragedy the BM and its Japanese partners worked together to ensure the exhibition could go ahead. Over 400,000 visitors came to the displays of Greek and Roman artefacts in Kobe and Tokyo. The exhibition then travelled to Mexico City, where press coverage praised ‘these masterworks . . . living creations capable of transforming the viewer’.

Fantastic Creatures took griffins, sphinxes, unicorns and other mythical creatures from different cultures to Korea and China.

Splendours of Mesopotamia, the first of three major exhibitions leading up to the opening of the Zayed National Museum, was the most popular exhibition ever held in the United Arab Emirates. To mark the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government, the BM sent Extraordinary Stories: Commonwealth Objects from the British Museum to the Western Australian Museum in Perth. Displays included a 1.8 million-year-old handaxe, a 12th-century sculpture of Ganesha from India, and a carved bronze Ife head from Nigeria.

The BM sent 1294 objects to 102 venues outside the UK in 2011/12. International loans included an ink and wash drawing by Rubens of
Venus and Adonis (Jerusalem); a Mayan carving of a blood-letting rite (Toronto); a limestone head of 50–30 BC from Italy of a woman resembling Cleopatra (Copenhagen); and a wood carving of a king from Mushenge in the Democratic Republic of Congo (New York). Most widely reported of the year’s loans was the return of the Cyrus Cylinder from Iran. As Jon Snow reported on his Channel 4 blog: ‘the entire cultural exchange has proved vastly important . . . The Cyrus Cylinder has ignited a new debate in Iran about the country’s culture and history.’

Freshly Dug and on to Facebook
BM staff engage in fieldwork across the globe – from South America to north Wales, the Far East to Sudan’s Amara West. In Britain the earliest records of human life are being excavated from the Channel Islands to Ffynnon Beuno in Wales, where archaeologists found the first evidence since 1912 for the Aurignacian (Upper Paleolithic) culture in Britain, 40,000 to 28,000 years ago. Further afield, excavations in south-east Turkey at the Neolithic site of Domuztepe are rewriting our understanding of the origins of the first cities. Despite political and other issues in the region, projects in Egypt and Sudan remained active. BM staff explored decorated tombs at Hagr Edfu and predynastic animal burials at an Upper Egyptian cemetery at Hierakonpolis. In northern Sudan, many sites are in peril from ten planned new dams that will drown much of the country’s archaeology. If funding can be found, a programme of extensive rescue archaeology will be pursued in these areas.

An interdisciplinary collaboration at Amara West has thrown up fascinating finds. You could follow the dig on the BM blog and some posts were published on Facebook, a fitting platform to expose the red-painted face of a newly discovered coffin mask, shown with large yellow earrings and a black wig. The painted mask dates to 1250–1070 BC, when Egypt ruled Nubia.

Excavating in Turkey
Archaeologists examine a Neolithic burial at Domuztepe.

Naukratis research
When this ancient Greek trading post in Egypt was first excavated, finds included this female figure, donated to the BM in 1886. (Height 13 cm)

Finds at Amara West
In northern Sudan, archaeologists discovered a painted coffin mask of 1250–1070 BC (shown left, with a modern rendering below).
One of the most fertile encounters of the ancient world was that between Egypt and Greece, which shaped European culture, but equally left its mark on northern Africa. At the heart of this exchange was the Greek trading post of Naukratis in the Nile Delta, a gateway for cross-cultural contact from the 7th century BC – mentioned in Herodotus and famously termed the Hong Kong of Ancient Egypt by its 19th-century excavator, Flinders Petrie.

Petrie's excavations were pioneering, but his interpretation was incomplete. The finds were soon distributed over more than 70 collections worldwide, making it virtually impossible to gain an overview of the site or to re-evaluate his conclusions. As a result, Naukratis remains poorly understood to this day.

The BM's Naukratis Project aims at last to unlock the enormous potential of this site. The task is not easy: 19th-century excavation diaries and letters have to be located and deciphered, and 15,000 objects – now distributed from Bristol to Greenock, from Cairo to Kyoto – have to be studied. But the effort will rescue one of the most important archaeological assemblages of the ancient world, subjecting it to a 21st-century methodological reassessment, and making it relevant and usable for generations to come.

The project – its current phase funded by the Leverhulme Trust and Shelby White–Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications – is truly interdisciplinary and international. It involves Classicists and Egyptologists, a collaboration with Durham University and many scholars elsewhere, and partnerships with museums on five continents. A programme of scientific analyses supports the archaeological and historical investigation. At the heart of the project, and its most vital tool, is a database of finds that will reunite, in the virtual space of the internet, objects widely dispersed across the globe. The database and other results of the research will eventually be made available to a global audience on the BM website.

Already, important results are emerging from the research. The project has identified ‘stray’ finds in many a museum’s basement as being from Naukratis, and reunited finds that fit together. Contrary to common perception, there is a surprisingly strong Egyptian element in the site’s material culture. Previously overlooked, largely due to early excavators discarding many Egyptian objects and a Hellenocentric bias in later scholarship, it suggests Naukratis had a mixed Egyptian and Greek population who probably intermarried from an early period.
BM benefactors

Since the BM was founded in 1753, its collection has been continually enriched by a wide range of benefactors. The Museum’s supporters, like its collection and visitors, come from all over the world and their generosity enables the BM to fulfil its international mission.

The American Friends of the British Museum have supported many global projects and have recently played an important role in securing the acquisition of an important collection of cylinder seals from the Middle East and a rare male Cycladic figurine. The International Training Programme, which welcomes museum professionals from dozens of countries, is entirely funded by donors. Their support ensures that the BM becomes truly a museum of the world by helping to create an international network of highly trained future cultural leaders. The BM’s new World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre will support global loans and exhibitions and has already attracted extraordinary benefaction.

The Museum is fortunate to have secured support for its activities in London and throughout the UK. This funding has come from corporations, private individuals, trusts and foundations. The Asahi Shimbun Objects in Focus displays are a popular feature of the BM’s exhibitions programme. The Museum’s work with families and young audiences has received ongoing support from Samsung Electronics through the Samsung Digital Discovery Centre. Research on and care for the collection also attracts vital funding. The Trustees are grateful to the Leverhulme Trust and the Arts & Humanities Research Council for research grants which recognise the BM as a centre of excellence. Major long-term commitments to funded research posts were made possible by the Henry Ginsburg Bequest and the Tabor Foundation. The Farjam Curator of Islamic Art has been appointed, with support from Dr Farhad Farjam. This year will see work on Japanese ceramics funded by Ms Claire Enders, Mr and Mrs William Arah and Robert and Catherine White.

Other supporters give vital general funding to the Museum. The British Museum Friends is one of the fastest growing membership groups in the UK arts sector. Over 40,000 Friends – whose benefits include free entry to exhibitions – now support the BM’s mission. The Global Partners scheme has a number of benefits for the staff of corporate members, as well as the opportunity to entertain at the BM. Patrons are private members who enjoy special ‘behind the scenes’ access and invitations. Some of the Museum’s annual subscribers have an interest in adding to particular aspects of the collection. The recently launched Vollard Group supports the acquisition of modern and contemporary works on paper, as does the Contemporary and Modern Middle Eastern Art Acquisitions Group, which recently travelled with the BM curator to Dubai to purchase new works. This growing community of supporters underpins many aspects of the work of the BM. A list of the Museum’s corporate partners and philanthropic supporters appears at the end of the BM Review (pp.65–7).
BM across the globe
A selection of activities in 2011/12

1. MEXICO: Mexico City
The BM international exhibition *The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece* includes this amphora of 530–520 bc depicting athletes. In 2011/12 over 550,000 people saw the tour in Mexico and Japan.

2. NEW YORK: New York City
This Mushenge king from the Democratic Republic of Congo was shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in an exhibition on heroic Africans – one of 1294 objects the BM loaned overseas.

3. DENMARK: Copenhagen
A new BM research consortium has been set up with over 100 Danish scientists and conservators. Major loans to Denmark included this limestone head of a woman resembling Cleopatra, 50–30 bc.

4. SIERRA LEONE: Freetown
Projects in Africa included support for a new display on Sierra Leone’s colourful masquerade traditions. Here, Krio artist Julius Parker prepares initial drawings for a masquerade mural.

5. SUDAN: Dangeil
Recent fieldwork in partnership with Sudan’s National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums is conserving a 1st century AD Amun temple. Finds in the region have included this torso of a Nubian king.

6. ISRAEL: Jerusalem
International loans included Rubens’s *Venus lamenting over the dead Adonis*, c.1612. Others ranged from an Etruscan silver panel (displayed in Leiden) to a Syrian mosque-lamp (Houston).

7. KENYA: Mombasa
The new Getty East Africa Programme will see BM staff deliver training with colleagues in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Recent work in the region includes opening improved collections stores.

8. AFGHANISTAN: Kabul
The BM is facilitating the return to Kabul of a 3rd-century Buddha stolen in 1992–4 from the National Museum. Support for the region’s culture included the BM’s Afghanistan exhibition in London, seen by 125,000 people in 2011.

9. INDIA: Mumbai
Longstanding ties with India expanded to include a training programme in cultural leadership. The courses for Indian museum staff took place in Delhi, London and Mumbai.

10. CHINA: Hong Kong
A Bengali dance mask was one of 150 *Fantastic Creatures* from the BM. The special exhibition opened in Hong Kong in January 2012. It was seen beforehand in Ulsan, South Korea by nearly 50,000 visitors.

11. JAPAN: Tokyo
This 18th-century kabuki print shows an impoverished samurai warrior. It was one of several BM loans to an exhibition on the artist Toshusai Sharaku held at the Tokyo National Museum.

12. AUSTRALIA: Perth
Shown in Perth, *Extraordinary Stories from the British Museum* used the collection to display 1.8 million years of artefacts from across the Commonwealth. It included this 12th-century sculpture of Ganesha from India.
Ganesha, 12th century
The four-armed god Ganesha holds a rosary, his broken elephant tusk, a dish of sweets and an axe. The sculpture from India was one of a group of loans to Perth, Australia. (85 x 51 cm)
Exhibitions

Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World
3 March to 17 July 2011
Supported by Bank of America Merrill Lynch

Treasuries of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe
23 June to 9 October 2011
Sponsored by John Stadts/In association with William and Judith Bollinger, Singapore; Betsy and Jack Ryan, Edward and Roberts Ahmanson, and The Huston Family Charitable Foundation

Modern Syrian Art at the BM
4 July 2011 to 9 January 2012

The Cost of Living in Roman and Modern Britain
11 August 2011 to 15 April 2012

Mine to Medals: The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
19 September 2011 to 9 October 2011
Supported by Rio Tinto Part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad

Mango at the BM: Drawings by Hoshino Yukinobu
11 August to 16 October 2011

Hokusai’s Great Wave
3 November 2011 to 8 January 2012

Sacred Souvenir: A Model of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre
2 February to 6 May 2012

Australian Season
Supported by Rio Tinto

Australia Landscape: Kew at the British Museum
21 April to 16 October 2011

Out of Australia: Prints and Drawings from Sidney Nolan to Rover Thomas
26 May to 11 September 2011
Supported by BP

Baskets and Belonging: Indigenous Australian Histories
26 May to 11 September 2011

Objects in Focus: The Asahi Shimbun Displays

Sikh Fortress Turban
17 February to 17 April 2011

Xu Bing: Background Story
12 May to 10 July 2011

Crocodile Dance Mask from the Torres Strait Islands
11 August to 16 October 2011

Picasso to Julie Mehretu: Modern Drawings from the BM Collection
7 October 2010 to 25 April 2011

Images and Sacred Texts: Buddhism across Asia
14 October 2010 to 3 April 2011

Traditional Jewellery and Dress from the Balkans
21 January to 11 September 2011

Adornment and Identity: Jewellery and Costume from Oman
21 January to 11 September 2011
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Traditional examines }

Eric Gill: Public and Private Art
10 February to 7 August 2011

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World loans

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012, BM objects have been seen in cities across the world

Aachen
Abeyzetyweth
Abu Dhabi
Alert Bay
Amsterdam
Amstrop
Amsterdam

Antwerp
Barcelona
Bath
Bedford
Berlin
Bergen
Birmingham
Bishop's Stortford
Brighton
Bristol
Bruges
Canberra
Cardiff
Carlisle
Cheltenham
Cirencester
Colchester
Cologne
Columbus

Compton Verney
Copenhagen
Covenry

Dorchester
Downpatrick
Dresden
Driffield
Dunwich
Durham
Ecouri
Edinburgh
Ely
Evaston
Exeter
Frankfurt

Gibraltar
Gifford
Glasgow
Hamphire
Harrogate
Hartford
Heatham
Hong Kong
Houston

Hull
Indianapolis
Ipwich
Jelling
Jerusalem

Karlsruhe
Kettering
Lagos
Leeds
Leiden
Lincoln

London
Los Angeles
Luton
Madrid
Manchester
Mexico City
Milan

Munich
Minister
Nagoya
New Haven

New York
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Newmarket
Norwich
Nottingham
Omagh

Omonagh
Orleans
Oxford
Paris
Penzance
Perth

Pforzheim
Plymouth
Provo
Reading
Richmond
Rome

Rossford
Sauerbrucken
Salem
Fitting right in
Manga sleuth Professor Munakata gets into the spirit of the Rosetta Stone.