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Chairman’s foreword

In a complex world, the topic of identity is becoming central to an increasing range of public discussions. What are the sources of our selves as individuals and as communities? In the past, answers were fairly easy to give. Family, religion and country gave clear, common reference points. Not any more. In Britain perhaps more than anywhere, all three are in different ways open to question and debate. We need to find different resources if we are to construct meaningful communities at home and abroad, resources that identify essential human affinities across apparent cultural differences. Together with the Director and staff, the Trustees of the British Museum are determined to put the collection to work as one such cross-cultural resource, making the BM a junction-box for London, Britain and the world.

The Trustees are keenly aware that their beneficiaries comprise the citizens of the world. This means that publics in China and Africa have just as much right to benefit from the BM’s activities as people in Britain. They are determined to extend the BM’s reach by sending the collection on loan around Britain and the world, and by sharing the BM’s expertise worldwide, especially with partners in Africa. We are clear that one of the BM’s top priorities for programming and advocacy in the coming years will be the increasing inclusion of African institutions within the world’s cultural exchange. Our ongoing partnership in Kenya, supported by the British government, together with major new initiatives with museums in west Africa, for which we aim to attract external support, are particularly important.

In 2006/7 the Trustees were delighted to welcome the Presidents of Mozambique and Ghana to the BM, where we have developed key partnerships.

The Trustees are very pleased that the BM’s reputation for scholarship and access continues to attract major gifts to the collection. Highlights from last year included an important anonymous gift of modern Italian prints which transformed the BM’s collection in this area and enabled it to stage the first ever UK exhibition of this material. Substantial funding was received for the Gallery Improvement Programme together with the continued support from our Patrons and Friends for a wide range of BM activities.

The collections of the BM speak to the entire world. Plans to develop a new world conservation centre and special exhibition space on site here in London embody a sustained commitment to fulfilling our extraordinary responsibility towards the cultural heritage of humanity. The Trustees are themselves a diverse group who represent a wide variety of national origins and cultural traditions. They are determined to realise the astonishing potential of the collection to help our audiences create the new understandings of the world and of themselves that we will need to meet the global challenges of the 21st century.

Niall FitzGerald KBE
Director’s foreword

According to the first Director of the British Museum, Gowin Knight, the BM’s public in the 1750s was divided into ‘natives’ and ‘foreign’. The collection was to be available to both equally, as a resource to help people understand the expanding world in which they found themselves.

Knight was above all famous as a scientist whose advances transformed traditional compasses into precise instruments, improving navigation techniques and contributing to the rise of the first age of globalisation. Partly as a result, London quickly became the mercantile centre of the world with an ever more diverse population to match. At the same time, the collection of the BM grew to encompass objects from the new worlds encountered by the seafaring Europeans.

London is still a city of immense diversity. The links Londoners maintain with their countries of origin put the capital at the centre of a worldwide conversation with all humanity. The BM aims to be both a forum and a partner in this international dialogue, and provide Britain’s complex communities with a cohesive sense of local identity, something which is arguably now achievable only within the global context.

In 2006/7, the BM’s focus on the cultures of the Middle East, Bengal and modern Ghana allowed us to tell stories that were as much about Britain as about Baghdad, Kolkata or Accra, not just because of the existence in London of significant communities from all these regions, but because of the continuing exchange of people and ideas between diasporas and their homelands which shapes the cultures of both.

This is why the BM needs to act not just in London, but internationally, because what we do ‘there’ immediately feeds back into what happens ‘here’. Working with partners across Africa to build the continent’s museum capacity has necessarily engaged us with Britain’s African communities in London and beyond, as indispensable partners in the project and as a key audience. Similarly, the BM’s International Curatorial Training Programme allows young museum professionals from all over the world to meet and learn together in London, and form a new network for their global future.

None of this could be achieved without the extraordinary efforts of the BM staff, whose work benefits from a growing sense of being part of a world community. Their shared vision of bringing the collections to a local and worldwide public reached new audiences across the globe, including the more than 4.9 million who visited the BM itself in 2006/7.

The BM was established in 1753, as a place of enlightened recognition of the boundlessness of human culture and curiosity. Moving beyond the old fixed borders of narrow nationhood, the BM today offers a different route to constructing identities for the new century, through complexity and difference – and above all, through tolerance. In the collections of the BM, the world can write the new histories that it needs to understand its past and to shape its future. This is challenging territory, but it is where the BM was always meant to be.

Neil MacGregor
British Museum in the city
Grand design
The Reading Room is transformed for the special exhibition of China’s terracotta warriors in September 2007.

Greek priestess, 370–360 BC
Holding her temple key, the priestess Choirine represents the most important official role allowed to a woman in ancient Greece.
‘We thought about giving visitors replicas to handle, but you wouldn’t get the tingle factor.’

Curator Jill Cook on the prehistoric Olduvai handaxes in BBC2’s The Museum

Collection

The starting point of the British Museum (BM) is the collection. Whether engaged in research, designing visitor guides, organising tours, serving food – the entire BM staff helps the public enjoy and engage with one of the world’s great cultural resources. It is a task which is never complete: new work on old objects provides fresh historical data and raises new queries; recent finds change the shape of the knowledge we have; social changes pose different questions of the BM and how it presents itself.

Acquisitions

Adding to the collection is a key component in preserving and interpreting the world’s cultures for the world. For the benefit of audiences now and in the future, the BM is committed to sustaining and improving the breadth of its collection. Acquiring new objects would not be possible without the support of external funders and we are grateful for their continued generosity.

Among the important acquisitions in 2006/7 was a rare bowl from northern Iran of the 6th to 4th century BC. Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund and the British Museum Friends, the bowl is thought to be one of the last major pieces of provenanced Achaemenid silver available from a private collection. Its beautiful lotus decoration reflects the influence of another culture within the Persian Empire, that of Egypt, source of another of the year’s major purchases (again with support from the Art Fund and BM Friends): a door-shaped stela of Ptaherhatef, door-keeper of Ptah, of 1320–1280 BC. The limestone relief’s importance derives in part from its combination of the distinct cults of the gods Ra and Osiris.

Another rare funeral monument, acquired with support from the Art Fund and BM Friends, shows the priestess Choirine holding her temple key on a Greek marble relief of 370–360 BC. Such an image of the most important role allowed to a woman in ancient Greece was hitherto unrepresented in the collection. With support from the Friends, Sharp bequest,
La Bouche du Roi, 1997–2005

Artist Romuald Hazoumé named his contemporary work (far right) after a port on the coast of Benin where Africans were sold into slavery. Its wide-ranging critique of ancient and modern servitude makes it one of the most important of the BM’s recent acquisitions. It is based on a famous, much-reproduced woodcut of 1789 of the Liverpool slave ship, Brookes (right).

The Hunt archive

The detail opposite shows part of the so-called firman issued to Lord Elgin in 1801. This copy, an Italian translation of the Turkish original, is the only known extant version, and was purchased by the BM in 2006 as part of the Hunt archive.

Iranian bird jar

The spout resembles the long beak of a bird, a testament to the ingenuity of its maker of the 9th century ac.
Pilgrim Trust, Friends of the National Libraries and Dilettanti Society Charitable Trust, the BM was also able to acquire the remains of the personal archive of the Rev. Philip Hunt, Lord Elgin’s chaplain during his embassy to Constantinople. Among Hunt’s private letters and papers is the only known text of the so-called firman issued to Lord Elgin in 1801, giving him permission to remove inscriptions and sculptures from the Acropolis. It is an Italian translation made for Lord Elgin from the Turkish original, which was carried to Athens by Raschid Aga, a Mubāshir of the Ottoman Court. Of higher rank than all the senior Ottoman officials in Athens, Raschid Aga took part in all the discussions in 1801–2 between Hunt and the city’s leaders as to what exactly Elgin’s team would be permitted to do.

Two of the most compelling additions to the collection were La Bouche du Roi (funded by the Art Fund and BM Friends), a contemporary work from Benin that reflects on slavery past and continuing, and a set of rare Anglo-Saxon sword hilt fittings (purchased with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and BM Friends). The latter, found in 2002 near Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, are extremely rare. Decorated with fine asymmetric gold filigree and set with cabochon garnets, the sword fittings have links with known sword suites from Italy and Sweden, raising new questions about trade and the movement of people across Europe during this period. As is now customary, they will be loaned for a period to a museum close to where they were found, in this case the North Lincolnshire Museum.

Gifts
The BM is grateful for the many important gifts made to the collection. In 2006/7 these ranged from two large Neolithic jars from northern China to 830 pieces of German printed currency, 1917–24. Other highlights included a Ming dynasty tile screen, an Iranian Iron Age bird-shaped pot, Csángó textiles from Romania, German Art Nouveau ceramics by J.J. Scharvogel, contemporary paintings from Vanuatu and the Trobriand Islands, and a leather wallhanging presented by the President of Tatarstan to the Director. In March 2007 the BM received a generous gift of six old-master drawings which included Perino del Vaga’s Alexander the Great depositing the work of Homer and
‘You’re about to see some of the most famous and extraordinary treasures from the British Museum’s collection.’

Tony Robinson introduces Channel 4’s BM quiz show, Codex

Japanese Galleries
New galleries cover the span of Japanese history, from prehistoric dogu figurines (right) to contemporary ceramics (far right).

Tiger screen, c.1781–2
A superb six-panel painted and gilded screen by Maruyama Okyo (detail below) was acquired for the new Japanese Galleries, which opened in October 2006.

The Changing Museum
The BM created a new space in Room 2 to display highlights of the collection during gallery refurbishment. The result created new cultural conjunctions and thought-provoking comparisons.
They were presented by Mrs Charlotte Gere, whose husband John Gere was for many years Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings.

**New spaces**

The BM always aims to present the collection in new and engaging ways. A superb 18th-century screen of a tiger and her cubs was acquired (with support from the Art Fund and the Brookes Sewell bequest) for the opening of the newly redesigned Japanese Galleries in October 2006, as were two prehistoric dogū figurines and a ceramic bottle by Living National Treasure Tokuda Yasokichi III, made especially for the new display. The BM’s collection of Japanese materials is now the most comprehensive in Europe, enabling curators to display a chronology from prehistory to the present, something no other museum outside Japan can do. Visitors can move from ancient ritual bells to samurai armour of the Edo period to disturbing images from the end of World War II.

The year saw extensive renovation of the building and front gates. Continuing work to existing galleries included Roman Britain and Ancient Iran, as well as plans for redisplay of the Nebamun tomb paintings, and Pacific and medieval collections. The BM seized the opportunity of refurbishment to create a new space to keep those objects on public view and show them in a different light. *The Changing Museum* opened in Room 2 in April 2006. It is a gallery where cultures mix. Exhibits have ranged from Yemeni votive material to the Battersea Shield, from paleolithic carving to Sasanian silver, and have been supported by dedicated volunteers running tours and an object-handling desk.

Refurbished galleries in Room 90 for the display of prints and drawings make the space more open and flexible, permitting large-scale shows to alternate with groups of smaller displays. One of the BM’s great treasures, the Michelangelo Cartoon, now hangs prominently to the right of the main entrance. Changing exhibits from the permanent collection will feature regularly to allow the public to get to know works that for reasons of conservation cannot be on permanent display. Camden Council approved the temporary conversion of the Reading Room into a display space large
‘The Museum is a library of objects. Science is one way you can read them.’

Museum scientist Rebecca Stacey in BBC2’s The Museum

**Research and conservation**

Behind acquisitions and new displays lie continuing conservation work and extensive research. Attending to the vast collection is an ongoing process, and the year included projects assessing the preservation of iron, glass and Orthodox icons in the BM, as well as laser cleaning and other fine technical work. The refurbishment of galleries provided the opportunity to work on objects such as the Nebamun wall paintings, while exhibitions, loans and tours prompted work on John White’s 16th-century watercolours of the New World, a Mughal jade terrapin which then toured the UK, and Pacific feather artefacts displayed in *Power and Taboo*.

The BM’s conservation and science work has a wider remit than its own collection. Many institutions nationally and internationally draw on the expertise of BM staff. Using scanning electron microscopy, scientists at the BM studied Iron Age gold and silver alloy torcs from Snettisham in Norfolk. Analysis revealed a wide range of alloys and treatments to alter the surface colour and composition of the finished objects, including very early use of mercury gilding. The results, as part of a research project jointly run by the BM and the University of Oxford, will form part of a major publication on the material held at the BM and Norwich Castle Museum.

Fragments of a Roman cavalry parade helmet that had been discovered by University of Leicester archaeologists were so badly deteriorated that the entire block of soil was lifted out and transported to the BM for controlled excavation and proposed three-dimensional imaging of its fragile remains. The silver-gilded helmet is a rarity in Britain, and the find is revealing arresting new details of life in early Roman Britain. Cleaning of one cheek-piece has revealed an image of a conquering Roman emperor being crowned by Victory.

Other recent finds brought to the BM for examination under the Treasure Act included Anglo-Saxon burial goods from Ringlemere in Kent. Following preliminary x-radiography, these objects, which included a silver slip knot and amber, glass and ceramic beads, underwent investigative conservation. Other national work ranged from identifying tar coatings on the timbers of the Newport Ship to work on enamels, glass, paintings and other artefacts from, among others, the Royal Collection, Courtauld Institute and Lichfield Cathedral, where BM scientists helped to identify the pigments on a rare Anglo-Saxon stone angel.

Collaboration with others not only takes the form of treatment and examination, but also relies on sharing expertise. BM assistance in preserving ancient Egyptian baskets at the Fitzwilliam Museum served equally to train Cambridge museum staff for future conservation projects. BM scientists travelled to China to examine jades, while visits from partners abroad included colleagues from Hunan Provincial Museum, China and the National Palace Museum, Taiwan. Over 16,000 people attended the BM on the day of a finds ‘roadshow’ in May 2006, which introduced the BM’s professionals to members of the public who brought in archaeological finds to be assessed and recorded. Widening access remains paramount, and among the BM’s awards in 2006/7 was a grant of $161,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for a pilot project to make conservation and scientific documentation available to a wider audience.

Presentation of BM research takes many forms. Staff across the organisation give talks and lectures in London, across the country and around the world. Publication in scholarly journals is extensive, as is the dissemination of recent discoveries through broadcasting and the web. An international congress, *The Object in Context: Crossing Conservation Boundaries*, opened up an intellectual debate with reference to a world culture that moved from Korean Buddhist temples to Galician immigrants in New York. Research publications included *The Ringlemere Cup* – from its ritual function to its broader significance in the maritime Bronze Age culture of north-west Europe – and *Turquoise Mosaics from Mexico*, a study of Aztec masks, helmets and knives first encountered by Europeans during the Spanish conquest of 1519. The book links known historical sources with new scientific discoveries made in the BM.
Sistine Chapel
The exhibition of Michelangelo drawings included an overhead screen that recreated scenes from the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Creation
Michelangelo’s study for Adam, c. 1511 (above), touched into life by God, and Nassar Mansour’s Kun, 2002 (above right), which uses Kufic script to allude to God’s pronouncement: “Be”, and it is’ (Qur’an 2:117), also referring to the creation of Adam.
‘For me the greatest inspiration that Michelangelo gives is that you can use the body as the physical equivalent for yearnings and otherwise inexpressible feelings.’

Antony Gormley in BBC4’s Michelangelo: Closer to the Master

Exhibitions

Exhibitions enable the collection to be reconfigured in fresh and revealing ways, drawing on loans and recent scholarship, and a range of material on display and in the study collection. They are a powerful tool to attract new audiences, especially those who may feel they already know the permanent displays or who have never visited the BM before. The BM has increasingly created thematic seasons of special exhibitions, encouraging visitors to move to different parts of the BM to experience more of its diversity than any single display could provide.

Michelangelo provided a muscular start to the year, with rave reviews in the national and international press for the BP Special Exhibition Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master (23 March – 25 June 2006) (an ‘astonishing exhibition’ said the Observer). Record-breaking attendance saw more than 160,000 people view the exhibition, 21% of whom were first-time visitors to the BM. So popular was it that in the final month, special late-night openings had to be arranged until midnight on Saturdays. The fragile drawings, rarely seen together, covered the entirety of the Renaissance artist’s career, from early sketches to decorate the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence to crucifixions drawn as the artist approached his death. A related display examined Michelangelo’s Italy through Roman and Florentine coins and medals.

Middle East Now was a full season of exhibitions and events designed to promote understanding of the past and present cultures of the Middle East, in partnership with Dubai Holding. Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East (18 May – 3 September 2006), drew nearly 90,000 visitors, and over 100 linked events attracted 11,000 participants. The main exhibition presented the BM’s contemporary collection of art from Morocco to Iran, Turkey to Saudi Arabia. Whether Israeli or Palestinian, Christian or Muslim, artists were shown wrestling with present-day concerns through a visual focus on text and calligraphy. The political resonance was not lost on the public. The Observer noted that the ‘British Museum again proves . . . that it can be a spectacular positive force for international relations’.

Drunken lover, 2003
Iranian artist Farhad Moshiri incorporates verses by Omar Khayyam on love’s inebriation. The oil painting’s cracked surface reflects his fascination with archaeology.
The goddess Durga
Creating a 20-foot-high painted sculpture in the Great Court was no small feat. Celebrating the festival of the goddess Durga was the centrepiece of the BM's Voices of Bengal season. Below, craftsman Madhu Sudan Pal at work on the tableau.

Muslims and Hindus in Bengal
The richly varied scroll (right) of scenes from the legend of the Bengali saint, Gazi, includes this harmonious conjunction of Hindus performing puja next to Muslims making offerings at the tombs of piras.

Bengali cuisine
Restaurateur Namita Panjabi and others joined food critic Fay Maschler for an evening exploring Bengali food.

Heech, 1980s
Middle East Now included contemporary sculpture in the Great Court by Iranian artist Parviz Tanavoli (right). The work realised the calligraphic spirit of many of the exhibits in Word into Art, displayed in the gallery upstairs.

‘It makes us proud.’
One Bengali participant describes Durga’s festivities in the BM in Channel 5’s Durga: The Goddess Comes to London
The BM’s strength is that here, modern art need not sit alone. Related exhibits provide a rich historical context for the contemporary Middle East. Families could enjoy the hands-on Asahi Shimbun Display, *Play the Oldest Game in the World: The Royal Game of Ur; Encounters* looked at travel and money in Byzantium; while *Sense of Place* reminded visitors how past Europeans have viewed the Middle East. Political artist James Boswell’s watercolours showed British troops in Iraq in the 1940s. The BM also exhibited colourful large-scale sculptures in the Great Court by contemporary Iraqi artist Dia al-Azzawi and Iranian sculptor Parviz Tanavoli.

The BM travelled further east in August with *Voices of Bengal*, a season of exhibitions and over 70 events, including a programme of Bengali music generously supported by the Tabor Foundation. *The Art of Peace* displayed Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore’s ink paintings, while *Myths of Bengal* used sculpture, paintings and prints to tell dramatic tales of Hindu gods and Muslim saints. The centrepiece was the stunning 200-year-old Gazi scroll, with its painted elephants and tigers, miracle-workers and monsters. The scroll gives an insight into religious harmony in undivided Bengal, with depictions of Hindus performing *puja* juxtaposed with Muslims making offerings at the tombs of *pirs*. All 13 metres of the scroll are now visible on the web, thanks to the generosity of the Tabor Foundation. Over 145,000 people saw the exhibition, and the BM was pleased that visitors from both religions came to explore their shared Bengali cultural inheritance. Most vivid was the season’s celebration of the goddess Durga (12 August – 27 September 2006), supported by the Helen Hamlyn Trust. The BM and the London Durga Puja Dusserah Committee invited master craftsmen from Krishnanagar in west Bengal to build a 20-foot-high sculpture of the Hindu river goddess in the Great Court. Visitors watched and discussed the tableau as it grew, and then joined in festivities held in the Great Court. The finished sculpture was eventually paraded through the streets of London for the Durga Puja at the Camden Centre, and finally taken west to ‘Putney on the Ganges’ (as the *Evening Standard* called it) to re-enact the river immersion of the image that traditionally closes Durga’s festival. An extraordinary influx of visitors attended *Voices of Bengal*, many from the south Asian community.
‘A marvellously exotic exhibition . . .
The simplicity of the design allows the strength and extraordinary presence of these objects to shine in a way that might easily have been compromised by a fancier approach.’

Joanna Pitman in The Times on Power and Taboo, October 2006
who, despite living in the UK for more than 30 years, had never visited the BM before.

Religious concepts also featured in another of the autumn’s major exhibitions, *Power and Taboo* (28 September 2006 – 7 January 2007). Sacred objects demonstrated ideas about the powerful gods of the dispersed islands of the eastern Pacific – an 18th-century Hawaiian feathered head; a wooden figure of the god A’a; from the Cook Islands, the only surviving wrapped staff god. Such objects were subject to *tapu*, not so much taboo in the sense of ‘forbidden’ as a complex set of practices to manage the gods’ power. Nearly 125,000 people attended, with more than 25,000 enjoying talks on empire and ghosts, films on Samoan sexuality and a specially composed Maori haka honouring these sacred objects at the exhibition’s opening.

Prints and drawings depicted a wide array of subjects. *Avigdor Arikha: From Life* (29 June 2006 – 7 January 2007) looked at 40 years of the artist’s drawings and prints. Born in Romania to German-speaking Jewish parents, Arikha survived a concentration camp in the Ukraine, was evacuated to Palestine, trained in Jerusalem and eventually settled in Paris. Yet it was to the BM, with its collection of fine art from Daoist painting to Langlands & Bell, that Arikha donated 100 of his works, including portraits of Samuel Beckett and Catherine Deneuve. *French Drawings from the British Museum: Clouet to Seurat* (29 June 2006 – 7 January 2007) was a two-part exhibition also shown at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. It presented 95 of the BM’s collection of more than 3500 French master drawings, including works by Poussin, Claude, Fragonard, Géricault and Degas. *Italian Prints 1875–1975*, based on a collection recently acquired through the generosity of an anonymous donor, displayed a great variety of works by 45 different artists, including Giorgio Morandi and Alberto Burri.

Targeted displays throughout the year focused on key objects in the collection. The first of the year’s Asahi Shimbun Displays offered a rare chance to see two versions of Rembrandt’s *The Three Crosses* (27 February – 23 April 2006). More than 57,000 visitors stopped to view the comparison. Classical sexuality followed with *The Warren Cup* (11 May – 2 July 2006), whose explicit nature raised questions of how different cultures measure social acceptability and taste.
The Three Crosses
Rembrandt’s use of drypoint achieves rich contrasts in this disturbing, panoramic vision of the Crucifixion. Visitors could compare two of the four states of this etching (the later, below right) in the first of the 2006/7 Asahi Shimbun Displays.

Flying fish
John White was fascinated by everything he encountered during his voyages to America, including the flying fish found in the sea off Cape Hatteras.

First images of America
John White’s portrait of an Algonquian chief shows a mature figure painted for a solemn gathering. Painted about 1585, the werowance has become an iconic image of first contact between Europeans and American Indians.
The display attracted over 92,000 visitors, including Oprah Winfrey and Kim Cattrall. *The Fabric of a Nation* (22 February – 10 April 2007) showed how all aspects of life in modern Ghana could be understood through textiles. The Asahi Shimbun Displays in Room 3 allow the BM to experiment and build on audience response for subsequent exhibitions. Elsewhere in the BM, *Good Impressions* (11 January – 20 May 2007), generously supported by Mr John H. Rassweiler, examined image and authority in the design and use of medieval European seals, while *Gods, Guardians and Immortals* (8 February – 5 August 2007) showed Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian paintings from China which happily mix figures from differing contemplative traditions.

A celestial gaze of a different sort featured in a major exhibition of the aerial photographs of Georg Gerster, supported by the Global Partners of the British Museum. *The Past from Above* (16 November 2006 – 11 February 2007) was a world tour of archaeological sites photographed from the air. With related artefacts shown alongside the landscapes, the exhibition was a fascinating portrait of human civilisation, from the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania to the Great Wall of China to modern-day London. Immensely beautiful (‘sumptuous’ said the Independent’s four-star review), the photographs were equally a moving record of what could never have been seen by many of the sites’ builders and of a world archaeology which is perpetually at risk. Several of the sites are either no longer visible or have changed significantly since they were photographed. The photographs of Iraq record ancient sites that have since been threatened by the disasters of war.

The year’s final season was *Atlantic Trade & Identity*, which began by marking the 200th anniversary of the Parliamentary abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The centrepiece was *La Bouche du Roi* by Benin artist Romuald Hazoumé (22 March – 13 May 2007). Based on an 18th-century print of a Liverpool slave ship, the multimedia work of art completed in 2005 uses an array of significant materials – petrol cans, liquor bottles, cowrie shells, tobacco – to signal the horror of past slavery and remind us that modern economies are not free of similar abuse. The work will later tour the UK, with support from Arts Council England. *Inhuman*
End of the slave trade
Resistance and Remembrance Day at the BM saw thousands arrive to honour the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the UK. Special guests included (clockwise from top left) Hugh Quarshie, Simon Schama, Kwame Kwei Armah, Colin McFarlane, Wole Soyinka, Kofi Mawuli Klu, Nelson Mandela televised in the Great Court, BM Trustee Bonnie Greer, Visual Ministry Choir and Yemi Araromi.

‘Events like today’s at the British Museum . . . help us to understand that an injury to one is an injury to all.’


‘We also draw hope from what the human spirit is able to achieve in the most terrible circumstances.’

Nelson Mandela at the BM’s Resistance and Remembrance Day, 2007
Traffic focused on the business of the slave trade, while Mind-forg’d Manacles began its tour of the UK using the work of William Blake to consider the meaning of slavery as a mental and physical state.

At the heart of the season was Resistance and Remembrance Day on 25 March 2007. Held in association with the Royal African Society and the cross-community forum Rendezvous of Victory, the commemoration featured song, dance, drama, film (in partnership with Camden Council) and talks about abolition and the achievements of the African diaspora, including those involved in all forms of resistance to slavery and the denial of human rights. With spaces for quiet meditation, the day culminated with a moving Ceremony of Remembrance in the Great Court with invited guests such as Wole Soyinka and David Lammy, and a huge crowd, including many families of African descent. Relayed messages included broadcasts from Gordon Brown and Nelson Mandela.

The Atlantic tie was linked to the year’s closing major exhibition. Sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation, with additional support from the American Friends of the British Museum, Mr Francis Finlay and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, A New World: England’s First View of America (15 March – 17 June 2007) featured watercolours by John White from the earliest expeditions to Virginia in the 1580s. Documenting the culture of the Algonquian Indians and the lands they inhabited, White’s depictions are the only surviving visual record of this early period in the continent’s history. ‘Unmissable . . . a once-in-a-lifetime show’, judged the Daily Telegraph.

Advance work for the major exhibitions of 2007/8 included preparations to the Reading Room to display the celebrated Chinese terracotta warriors of Xi’an in September, generously sponsored by Morgan Stanley. Press coverage has been extensive, with tens of thousands of tickets already sold.
‘They’re only tiny, a few inches tall, and yet they are so important – their importance is out of all proportion to their size.’

Peter Firmin discusses the Lewis Chessmen on BBC4’s Masterpieces of the British Museum

Busy at the BM
The year’s wide-ranging public activities included film, dance, talks and school visits. Highlights included the absorbing inspiration of Middle Eastern calligraphy and Bengali dance in the BP Lecture Theatre.

Learning
The BM’s work is often unseen by the public, whether it is readying the building each morning before visitors come in, safeguarding an object from the ravages of time, or working as part of a global scholarly community to uncover new information about the collection. Sharing the building and its knowledge with as many different people as possible is essential. The BM’s wide-ranging learning programmes provide innovative approaches to a great variety of audiences, some on-site, but many in their own communities.

Young people are always a focus. There were over 157,000 pre-booked school visits in 2006/7, with nearly 6000 of those coming from abroad in the last six months of the year. The Voices of Bengal season had pupils interpreting scenes from the multi-religious Gazi scroll through dance, storytelling and acting to learn about myth and religion in India. As part of Middle East Now, the BM’s Arab World Education Programme, funded by the Karim Rida Said Foundation, brought 180 students from Newham, Camden and Hounslow to the BM to look at contemporary Middle Eastern art and formulate their own responses to it. Working with Iranian, Iraqi and other artists back at their schools, they created an astonishing array of sketches and paintings on themes such as ‘headgear’ and ‘habitation’. Teachers said the programme made them much more confident to explore Arab and Islamic topics with their students. Plans are in place for a range of freely accessible web resources, Inset sessions and materials which will help teachers improve awareness and understanding of the Arab world among their pupils.

Communities
On-site programmes often develop wider audiences off-site. Raising awareness of the BM’s African collection, ‘African Maths’ for Key Stage 1 pupils expanded with ‘African Tales in the Reading Room’ for primary schools in Lambeth. The Wellcome Trust Gallery of Living and Dying provided a range of initiatives, from citizenship work with GCSE science students in Lewisham on the global impact of HIV and AIDS to a theatre piece
Family fun

Popular events at the BM in 2006/7 included the Big Draw (above), Chinese New Year celebrations, object handling and dance – from Maori dancing at the opening of Power and Taboo (right) to belly dancer Mia Serra (far right) encouraging participants to feel ‘the rhythm of the heart’.
based on a life story from cradle to grave. Primary schools created artworks based on healing, community and keeping healthy.

Work with community groups focuses on diversity and improving access, a benefit both to communities and to the BM itself. Reminiscences gathered from local Bengalis were incorporated into the exhibition *Myths of Bengal*. Joint projects with Aduna, Black Cultural Archives and other bodies addressed Ghanaian textiles and fashion with a range of talks, workshops, song and theatre events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the country’s independence. To mark the bicentenary of the parliamentary abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the BM consulted with community groups so that their voices could be carried through the entire programme, from the BM displays to a Camden film project working with teenagers in care. The BM works with a great many groups in London. It arranged more than 30 special tours in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), many of whom were refugees or from migrant communities. Following their powerful film made in response to *Throne of Weapons*, inmates at Pentonville Prison worked with BM staff to create an art project based on the *Cradle to Grave* sculpture (supported by the Wellcome Trust), a version of which was displayed in the prison.

**Families**

Family events draw thousands of young people to the BM each year to explore different cultures. During *Voices of Bengal*, children could try on traditional costumes or create a Rangoli flower mosaic. The Paul Hamlyn Children’s Library in the Reading Room in the Great Court has proved immensely popular with visiting families through storytelling, books on ancient societies and resources for drawing favourite objects in the collection. Other events throughout the year included Chinese New Year celebrations, handling world archaeological finds, and, most powerfully, *Resistance and Remembrance Day* in March 2007, to mark the end of the transatlantic slave trade.

Visitors come to the BM for a variety of reasons: social, contemplative, intellectual. A wide array of events enrich people’s experience of special exhibitions and the permanent collection. In 2006/7 one could learn Arab calligraphy or Renaissance drawing techniques, or meet living artists such as Israeli Avigdor Arikha or Maori sculptor George Nuku. One could hear lectures on Michelangelo or modern Turkey; watch a Japanese tea ceremony; experience multimedia artist Beyonder’s *Fabrica* based on the Sainsbury African Galleries. Concerts in the BM travelled from the Renaissance and Enlightenment to the music of Bengal and Sufism. The BM film seasons reached a peak of popularity in 2006/7, with over 6500 filmgoers attending series devoted to Michelangelo, the Middle East and India – from artist documentaries to Satyajit Ray’s celebrated *Apu* trilogy. Special days ranged from a Pacific Islands Day for families, a behind-the-scenes Museum Studies Day, to a study day exploring the rich heritage of Syria, from the Hittites to the Ottomans. Staff lectures outside the BM included two symposia on Iran run at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) with the London Middle East Institute.

**Civic space**

For over 250 years, the BM has presented its collection ‘for the use and benefit of the Publick’. While the public value of the institution and its scholarly attention remains undimmed, what is equally alight is a determination to engage with new audiences over contemporary concerns. The BM must continue to be a civic space, a safe environment where the issues of the day can be freely considered and contested, and everyone can have their say.

Crossing as it does a great variety of cultures and periods, the collection provides an outstanding opportunity for wrestling with global concerns. The year’s sell-out *Guardian* debates, chaired by Jon Snow, invited the public to take up issues of faith and culture in Bengal and the boundaries of artistic expression in the Middle East. Guests such as Nobel Prize-winner Amartya Sen joined journalists, artists, historians and economists from around the world to analyse the historical developments that have led to contemporary conflicts. But their gaze was not entirely retrospective. As dialogue with members of the audience showed, even
Guardian debates
The topical Guardian debates draw wide-ranging audiences to hear speakers from around the globe. To discuss Bengal’s history and multiple identities, Faith, nation, culture drew (clockwise from top left) Indian journalist M.J. Akbar, economist Amartya Sen, historian Joya Chatterji, broadcaster Jon Snow (chairman) and human rights expert Tufyal Choudhury. Director Neil MacGregor (below left) was also on hand.
nations divided by longstanding conflicts have found ways of moving beyond dissent, using their history to shape their future.

**International speakers**

Many invited guests from around the world spoke at the BM. They included another Nobel Prize-winner, molecular biologist Sir John Sulston, who gave the BP annual lecture on science and globalisation. Donny George, former chairman of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Iraq, talked movingly of the depredations to world culture in his homeland, including damage to the site of Babylon and a situation so dangerous that the national museum is closed to visitors and staff. The BM now carries the responsibility of being the primary place in the world to view Mesopotamian cultural heritage. In partnership with the *London Review of Books*, the legacy of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* was discussed, as was the literature of conflict in the Middle East and (as it emerged) the not yet defunct idea of taboo in the West. The hunger for knowledge was more literally satisfied with two evenings hosted by food critic Fay Maschler: one on Middle Eastern food with Berber restaurateur Mourad Mazouz, Claudia Roden and others, and a second on Bengali cooking.

The BM’s civic commitment is more than a matter of enlightened discourse. With the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the BM established a partnership with eBay to prevent antiquities being illegally sold online in the UK. A team from the Portable Antiquities Scheme now monitors antiquities sold on eBay.co.uk to ensure compliance with Britain’s Treasure Act. The arrangement has been highly praised by Culture Minister David Lammy and the Metropolitan Police, who called it a ‘good example of the art market and those concerned in the preservation of antiquities working together to help prevent and detect cultural property crimes’.

The World Harmony Run is an event in which runners from more than 80 countries pass a flaming torch from hand to hand across the world. The torch had crossed 40,000km by the time its international journey ended with a huge celebration at the BM in 2006. The run’s aim, to promote international friendship and understanding, sits happily with the BM’s own.
British Museum across the country
National tours
Throne of Weapons – a work made of decommissioned firearms by Mozambican artist Kester – toured the country from London to Belfast and Liverpool, including school visits in Camden, Coventry and Cardiff.

Great Gold Buckle
This early 7th-century buckle was sent to Sutton Hoo as the latest in a series of BM special exhibitions at the Anglo-Saxon burial site.

‘I find it terrifying every time. One slip and 3000 years of history goes.’

Assistant Keeper Richard Parkinson discusses moving Egyptian antiquities in BBC2’s The Museum
The British Museum belongs as much to the nation as to the capital. Central to the BM’s aim to share objects and expertise across the country is its Partnership UK scheme, which co-operates with organisations throughout Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. There are 18 principal partners, with links through them to a wider network of relationships. Supported by funding from the Dorset Foundation, Partnership UK works to enlarge public enjoyment of the national collections and provide access for everyone to the broad spectrum of cultural history and expert knowledge that the BM can offer. The BM itself benefits from the new light shed on its material by different audiences in a variety of settings.

**National loans**

Loans are an essential way to reach new audiences and provide many visitors, especially those outside London, with access to the BM’s collection, often for the first time. In 2006/7, a total of 2222 objects were lent to 172 UK venues. BM objects on tour nationally were seen by over 2.5 million people. By far the most well attended of the year’s loans was a group of 84 Egyptian items exhibited at the newly refurbished and vastly popular Kelvingrove Museum. The rare amulets, portraits, papyri and other artefacts joined the Glasgow museum’s own Egyptian material to create an unusually rich display that combined strengths from both collections.

Egypt also featured in a loan to Wales of part of the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, which travelled to the Egypt Centre at Swansea University. In Lincoln, a 13th-century silver seal was part of the celebrations to mark the 800th anniversary of the city’s mayoralty; while at Sutton Hoo, where the BM has organised special displays at the National Trust visitor centre since 2001, the beautifully interlaced Great Gold Buckle from the 7th-century ship burial was featured as an ‘Object in Focus’.

Dover Museum displayed the recently discovered Ringlemere cup, one of only two Bronze Age cups of its type in Britain.
On board
The pleasure of board games is shared across the world, and was shared across the country in a BM touring exhibition which included the Lewis chessmen.

‘It’s an incredible collection . . . There is an immense openness to a variety of beauty and ugliness.’

Adam Mars-Jones praises Matisse to Freud on BBC1’s Newsnight

Emperor’s terrapin
Carved of jade around 1600, the terrapin is associated with the Crown Prince Selim, son of the great Mughal emperor, Akbar. It toured to six UK cities in 2006/7.
**British Museum across the country**

**Tours across the UK**

‘Spotlight’ tours demonstrate the power of taking a single object (or small group of items) on the road. *Throne of Weapons*, made of decommissioned firearms by African artist Kester, is a powerful testament to the civil war in Mozambique. Its tour from London to Liverpool, Bristol to Belfast, concluded in 2006 with a programme of visits to schools in Camden, a conference in Bournemouth highlighting ‘dynamic collections’, and the UK Youth Parliament at the BM itself in London.

*The Emperor’s Terrapin* has sparked a range of delighted responses, from ‘Thought for the Day’ on BBC Radio Scotland to a yoga class in Cardiff working on the ‘tortoise position’. The terrapin was carved from one of the world’s largest pieces of jade around 1600, probably for the Islamic court of the Mughal Crown Prince Selim. A Partnership UK tour, the carving travelled for the first time since being donated to the BM in 1830, visiting Walsall, Cardiff, Sunderland, Leicester, Glasgow and Bradford in 2006/7. Of indeterminate sex when it left the BM, the terrapin will return, after some debate during the tour, happily confirmed as a female.

Loans allow the BM to function as a lending library to the nation. Touring exhibitions extend this focus to a range of topical subjects. *Made in Africa* presented three prehistoric handaxes from the Olduvai Gorge, some of the oldest human artefacts in existence. Following their display at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, they toured with a handling collection to Norwich, Newcastle and Bolton, with further venues to come. The homoerotic Warren Cup followed its feature display in the BM with a journey to York in December. *Across the Board: Around the World in 18 Games* showed the historical antecedents of games such as chess and ludo that continue to engage players across many cultures. Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Education and Skills, the exhibition travelled to six venues, including Leicester, Lincoln and Luton.

The BM’s touring partnership with the Hayward Gallery sent two exhibitions across the country in 2006/7. *Matisse to Freud* displayed the film critic Alexander Walker’s collection of modern works of art in Lincoln, Leicester and Harewood House in Yorkshire as part of a five-
'When you look them directly in the eye, you can somehow make contact across the centuries — they’re almost alive.'

Irving Finkel discusses the power of historic artefacts on BBC4’s Masterpieces of the British Museum

Christ and Constantine
This roundel is one of the earliest surviving depictions of Christ. It is from a mid-4th-century mosaic found at Hinton St Mary, Dorset, and was loaned to Yorkshire Museum for their exhibition celebrating Constantine’s proclamation as Emperor in 306 AD.
venue tour. Rembrandt as Printmaker marked the 400th anniversary of his birth by showing fine etchings by the celebrated Dutch artist in Hull, Bath and Newcastle.

Supporting regional exhibitions
The BM also works with its UK partners to support their own exhibitions. The roundel from the Hinton St Mary Roman mosaic pavement – possibly the earliest depiction of Christ – made a rare journey outside London for the Yorkshire Museum’s major exhibition on Constantine the Great. Marking the 1700th anniversary of Constantine’s proclamation as Roman emperor in York, the exhibition was seen by more than 50,000 people.

Pacific Encounters: Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760–1860 at the Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, drew extensively on the BM’s Polynesian sculptures, textiles and other materials to examine the region’s first contact with European explorers, missionaries and traders. At nearby Norwich Castle Museum, completely different aspects of the collection supported Art at the Rockface, a display exploring the relationship between geology and artistic expression. The perennial fascination with ancient Egypt reached new audiences through Egypt Revealed at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle (over 47,000 visitors), and Beasts of the Nile, an exhibition for schools and families organised by Bolton Museum and Art Gallery that has toured widely, ending in Scunthorpe and Swansea in 2006.

In London itself, at the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, Amazon to Caribbean: Early Peoples of the Rainforest looked at Amerindian culture. The BM made a substantial loan of material from Guyana and the Caribbean Antilles. The Horniman is one of Partnership UK’s principal partners with whom the BM has worked on a number of projects in London and Africa. Its director, Janet Vitmayer, praised the programme’s lack of bureaucracy, and its flexibility and trust: ‘It is a great model for museum-to-museum cooperation.’ Forthcoming UK loans include the Alcester Tau Cross (Warwick), Lindow man (Manchester), and a series of national touring exhibitions on ‘Great Civilisations of the World’. The first, Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors and Heroes, opened in Gosport, Hampshire on 31 March 2007, while a second on ancient China is in development.
‘I get a sense of the real thrill that people get when they come upon something that’s valuable either economically or because it makes such an impact in terms of its historical significance.’

Culture Minister David Lammy praises the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Touching the torc
Culture Minister David Lammy holds an Iron Age torc. He was enthusiastic that such artefacts often end up in local museums, where young people ‘get that rewarding sense of pride in the wider narrative of this country. That’s exciting.’
Regional work

Partnerships based on true collaboration and exchange are essential to the BM’s purpose. It considers its expertise and collection a shared resource, and benefits in turn from the knowledge and skills of others. Joint acquisitions are a cooperative way of enabling major artefacts to remain within the public domain. The Staffordshire Moorlands Pan is a 2000-year-old souvenir of Hadrian’s Wall purchased jointly by the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent; Tullie House Museum and Gallery, Carlisle; and the BM, with support from HLF. It was displayed in Stoke-on-Trent in 2006, before moving on to Carlisle in 2007.

The BM fosters a range of flexible relationships to its work. Manchester Museum and Imperial War Museum North organised, on behalf of Partnership UK, a seminar on community engagement through volunteering. Staff exchanges build profitable ties with outside institutions, enabling each organisation to benefit by learning from the other. The most recent of these exchanges has been between BM front of house staff and those at the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow. Global Graduates welcomes gifted and talented students from non-traditional and diverse backgrounds from around the UK on a one-year career development programme. The exchange of knowledge is equally at the heart of the BM enterprise, whether it is archaeological study with the Natural History Museum and five university partners on the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain (funded by the Leverhulme Trust) or scientific and conservation work with the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge or National Museums Liverpool. The Learning Department led a workshop on interpretation in Newcastle as part of the Great North Museum development. The Department of Prehistory and Europe was closely involved in helping Newark and Sherwood Museum Service purchase an Iron Age gold torc, one of the most valuable items gathered under the Treasure Act to be acquired by a regional museum.

National collaborations often have an international remit. A two-day conference on Transanatolia: Bridging the Gap Between East and West was organised jointly with the University of Liverpool. Scientific research and conservation welcomed a wide spectrum of scholarly interest, from a visit to metals specialists by the Ashwell Archaeology Group to international collaborators from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington and the National Palace Museum, Taiwan. Lectures hosted in the UK by the BM drew speakers from Israel and Lithuania, while cultural delegations visited Britain from Russia, Yemen and Iran. Equally, programmes such as the International Curatorial Training Programme involve partner museums across the country, from the National Museum Wales to Glasgow City Museums.

Two of the year’s events perhaps best sum up the BM’s national role. A conference highlighting the BM’s Partnership UK programme had a spectrum of BM experts describing their work nationwide – from the Portable Antiquities Scheme to shared collections – alongside representatives from UK partners in Manchester, Glasgow, Cardiff, York, Exeter and Luton. The UK Youth Parliament, which convened for the second time at the BM, welcomed nearly three hundred 11–18-year-olds from across Britain to meet politicians, business leaders and other figures from public life to discuss a range of current issues under the theme of reconciliation.

Portable Antiquities Scheme

The BM has been a key supporter of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and was instrumental to its establishment in 1997. The Scheme is the only proactive mechanism in England and Wales for recording archaeological finds made by the public. In the past, such finds slipped away from scholarly attention and the public good. But the Portable Antiquities Scheme has encouraged landowners, metal-detector users, amateurs and others not to suspect institutional involvement, but to treat our archaeological heritage as a shared nationwide project on British history.

The Scheme has found an effective way of welcoming the public into the BM and its success continues to grow. Over 260,000 finds
A superb example of a bronze Iron Age comb was discovered in Warwickshire, the first of its kind to be found in Britain.

Working with the public
The Portable Antiquities Scheme provides support to discoverers of treasure and other archaeological finds. Crucial information which would once have been lost is now recorded and studied by amateurs and experts. The year’s finds brought to public attention included a Roman figurine of a horse and rider found in Cambridgeshire.

‘It’s like a jigsaw puzzle. You find these small bits and gradually over a period of years you get a picture of what’s been going on in the area.’

Metal-detectorist John Darvill on discovering Anglo-Saxon artefacts reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Iron Age comb
A superb example of a bronze Iron Age comb was discovered in Warwickshire, the first of its kind to be found in Britain.
have been reported since PAS began, with not only objects coming to light, but detailed data and photographs about their location and context, key information for establishing trade patterns, past migrations and other historical activity. Public interest has been overwhelming. The number of finds being reported increased by 14% over the previous year, and visitors to the website (www.finds.org.uk) look on average at 20 pages per visit. Previously unknown archaeological sites have come to light because of work under the Scheme, including Cumbria’s first Viking Age inhumation cemetery.

The year saw some remarkable PAS finds: an Iron Age bronze comb from Warwickshire (the first of its kind to be found in Britain); a beautiful Roman figurine of a horse and rider found in Cambridgeshire; a Venetian silver groat found in Sussex; and a unique gold 7th-century coin from France, the first known example of its type and the first from Bourges to be discovered in this country. Treasure finds (those legally bound to be reported under the Treasure Act) included a Tudor silver dress fitting in the form of a portcullis found in Suffolk and a Bronze Age gold conical bead from the Chichester area.

The Scheme is fast becoming a model for the rest of Europe in processing public archaeological finds. Its strong outreach work helps. Since 2003, Finds Liaison Officers and others have given over 1000 talks and organised nearly 2000 finds days: 46% of visitors to a nationwide series of Fabulous Finds Days said they had never visited the host museum before. Television coverage since 2003 has reached 52.5 million viewers. The effects are long-term. In May 2006, the very first Code of Practice for metal detecting was agreed by the major archaeological bodies and metal-detecting and landowners’ organisations in England and Wales. The purpose is to work together to avoid the problems of depredation, and to ensure a national finds strategy that addresses the concerns of all.
British Museum throughout the world
Creating a goddess
Bengali master craftsman Nemai Chandra Pal (above) and Biswajit Chakraborty (below) were filmed for Channel 5 as they constructed the goddess Durga in the BM Great Court.

Thames as the Ganges
Durga’s completion was celebrated with food and festivity. At the end of her festival she was immersed in the river at Putney.
Global communication

The BM collection is aimed at universality. It is this goal that drives not simply the BM’s national profile, but also its increasingly wide-ranging international activity.

Television

Communications are central to the BM’s unique capacity to tell the story of mankind. Television programmes such as Masterpieces of the British Museum, and their afterlife online and on DVD, reach limitless new audiences both at home and abroad. This six-part series was ‘a constant little gem’, according to the Guardian. Made by Fulmar Television and Film for BBC4, it was first broadcast in the summer of 2006, and has since reached nearly two million viewers. Its subjects ranged across the world, from Assyrian lion hunt reliefs to a glittering Aztec double-headed serpent. Celebrating specific cultures, episodes such as The Head of an Ife King nonetheless showed how objects are not culturally isolated: the bronze of which the Nigerian sculpture is made was transported across the Sahara by caravan, the skill of Ife craftsmen travelled south to Benin, where a very different set of celebrated bronzes was born.

Among the individual television programmes was Michelangelo, presented by Neil MacGregor for BBC4. Durga: The Goddess Comes to London, produced by Mayavision for Channel 5, traced a journey from Mother Ganges to Father Thames through the construction of a 10-foot-high painted statue of the goddess Durga made of clay and straw in the BM’s Great Court. The experience was a ‘magical multicultural triumph’, proclaimed the Independent. With the UK Bengali community, the Hindu river goddess was feted in the BM with drummers and dancers, carried through the streets of London to Camden, and finally cast into the river at Putney, in the traditional act of immersion that closes her festival. It was an unusual and moving sight outside Bengal. ‘It makes us proud’, said one Bengali participant of Durga’s triumph in London.

A different approach to the collection came via Codex, hosted by Tony Robinson for Channel 4. The game show locked five members of the
‘His reign was marked by an exercise of religious tolerance that made him a model ruler for centuries after.’

Neil MacGregor discusses the rule of Persian king Cyrus in Uncovering Iran: Ancient and Modern on BBC Radio 4

Tomb of Cyrus
Identity in modern Iran, closely linked as it is to the celebrated past of Persia, was the subject of BBC Radio 4’s Uncovering Iran.

‘Get seven words right, and you’ll win two letters in the Codex.’

Tony Robinson puts his contestants through their paces in Channel 4’s BM quiz show, Codex
The first episode of ‘The Museum’ on BBC2 drew 2.7 million viewers.

public in the BM at night to decode treasures and work toward winning an exotic trip by deciphering the mystery codex. Aimed at families and a wider audience, the show encouraged viewers to visit the BM to follow their own Codex Trail. The Evening Standard summed up its success: ‘Channel 4’s Codex is the latest attempt by television to make learning fun. Fortunately, it differs from most of the others in one important respect: it makes learning fun.’ A second series is scheduled.

The latest venture in the BM’s broadcasting presence is The Museum, a ten-part BBC2 television series taking viewers behind the scenes at the BM. Less exposé than exploration, the half-hour shows reveal what the public rarely gets to see: how the collection is a living concern, ever-updated and changing; the terrifying, sometimes comically complex responsibility of maintaining a vast public building or moving huge artefacts; the BM’s international presence in preserving the history of mankind not as a set of fine objects on display, but as a shared effort at preservation, research and cross-cultural understanding across the globe. It is a dialogue the BM hopes to achieve with its widespread international television coverage, with broadcasts in 2006/7 in China, Korea, Japan, Mexico, USA, Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere.

Radio
The year’s main radio coverage focused on the Middle East. In September 2006, Director Neil MacGregor presented Uncovering Iran: Ancient and Modern, an examination of how modern Iranian identity is shaped by the ancient wonders and political resonance of Isfahan, Persepolis and Pasargadae, where the great Persian leader Cyrus is buried. The BBC Radio 4 programme was accompanied by one-minute ‘postcards’ from Iran, broadcast throughout the Iran season.

Website
Extending international access to the collection is increasingly achieved through the website. Around 7.7 million visitors looked at the website in 2006/7. A wealth of online information about objects, displays and projects is available worldwide, while specific requests prompt new web collaborations. In summer 2006, Birzeit University in Palestine approached the BM for an online version of the exhibition Word into Art for its students in Ramallah, unable to travel to
see the range of Middle Eastern art in the exhibition. New access features of the site in 2006/7 provided audio descriptions and text-to-speech functions for children with learning difficulties and blind and partially sighted adults. Changes to the Merlin database, which will eventually hold all of the BM’s collection online, will revolutionise knowledge structures on the site, allowing the public much greater access to the BM’s intellectual resources.

Publications
The British Museum Press likewise reaches general readers, academics and children across the world. In 2006/7 the Press published 43 titles in its core areas of history, art and archaeology. Record-breaking sales of over 21,000 copies were achieved by the catalogue, *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master*. The Press’s first DVD, *Michelangelo: A Film*, was followed by six DVDs of *Masterpieces of the British Museum*. Research publications included volumes on Roman provincial coinage and Etruscan ceramics. Forthcoming titles include a study of politics and law in Yemen and a how-to book on writing insults and greetings in hieroglyphics.

Curator Mark McDonald won the 2006 Mitchell Prize for best art history book with *The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus (1488–1539): A Renaissance Collector in Seville* (published with support from the Getty Foundation). *Apollo* magazine wrote: ‘one cannot stress the importance of these findings highly enough . . . [the book’s] ideas, thoughts and approaches will form the basis of the new research that will now have to be undertaken.’ *British Iron Age Seaxes and Scabbards* and *Sutton Hoe: A Seventh-century Princely Burial Ground and its Context* took joint second place for the biennial Scholarly Publication Award of the British Archaeological Association. Three exhibition catalogues were short-listed for the Art Newspaper/AXA Art Award 2006: *Pacific Encounters: Art & Divinity in Polynesia 1760–1860; Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia; and Samuel Palmer: Vision and Landscape*.

Internationally, new publications accompanied many of the BM’s touring exhibitions and collaborations. Egyptian art featured in a book from the University of Washington Press for the American tour of *Temples and Tombs*. In Kenya, *Hazina: Traditions, Trade and Transitions in Eastern Africa* was accompanied by a catalogue in Swahili and English written by European, American and...
The world’s treasures
Over two million visitors have seen the BM exhibition, *Treasures of the World’s Cultures*, on its tour of Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China.
British Museum throughout the world

African scholars. Elsewhere exhibition catalogues in Chinese and Japanese were published for non-English-speaking visitors.

Exhibitions abroad

Broadcasting carries the BM’s collection far beyond its building in Bloomsbury. An increasing number of international exhibitions and loans also enable the BM to share its holdings worldwide. With new international audiences stretching from Nairobi to Taipei, the BM aims not simply to provide access to important artefacts of world culture, but to foster dialogue, collaboration and understanding of cultural interconnectedness.

China and beyond

The exhibition Treasures of the World’s Cultures celebrates 250 years of collecting and research at the BM, the world’s first national museum. The touring exhibition has been seen by more than two million visitors in Japan, Korea and China, where it was shown at the Capital Museum, Beijing from March to June 2006, with support from Standard Chartered Bank and ICBC. Highlights show how the world’s many cultures have responded to the common concerns of humanity: from Egyptian mummy boards to Greek statuary, Islamic mosque lamps to Benin plaques, drawings by Leonardo and Raphael to prints by Rembrandt and Goya. Sponsored by China Times, Treasures of the World’s Cultures opened at the National Palace Museum, Taipei in February 2007, the first BM exhibition to be lent to Taiwan.

China welcomed a second BM exhibition in 2006. Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum was seen by over 300,000 people at the Shanghai Museum between July and October. The BM’s collection of Assyrian artefacts is one of the finest in the world. The exhibition of 34 large stone reliefs from Ninevah and Nimrud was accompanied by ivories, ceramics, bronze bowls and important cuneiform tablets from the royal library of King Ashurbanipal, each representing a facet of life in Assyria. The transmission of knowledge was not simply an aspect of the public display, with its information on Assyrian mathematics, magic,

‘The Museum has embarked on a new mission of communication with the modern world, not only presenting parts of its collection in countries where it once gathered art and artifacts, but also bringing into its galleries art from regions undergoing rapid and unpredictable change.’

Alan Riding in the International Herald Tribune, June 2006
“Britain Meets the World” is arguably the most significant bilateral event to take place at the former Imperial Palace since George III’s ambassador Lord Macartney came bearing gifts in 1793 . . . The consequences of this interaction [with China] are economically incalculable and culturally beyond comprehension. A great wall of silence and suspicion has been breached, letting in a rip-tide of enlightenment.’

Norman Lebrecht in the Evening Standard, March 2007

English or Chinese?
This coffee pot of around 1770 is enamelled with Chinese figures. Made in the Worcester Porcelain Factory, it featured in the exhibition, Britain Meets the World, in Beijing.
astronomy and medicine. Chinese curators worked with the BM to exchange professional expertise, including a visit to London to examine Chinese ceramics in the BM’s own collection.

*Britain Meets the World 1714–1830* is a new collaborative exhibition which the BM has staged with the Palace Museum, Beijing. Sponsored by The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation, it opened in March 2007 and is the first time that an exhibition and catalogue have been co-curated across the two venues. The exhibition shows how British artists, scholars, traders and travellers engaged with the world as the nation emerged as an international power. It is part of the BM’s wider programme of exchanges with Chinese museums which will span the Cultural Olympiad from 2008–12 and include an exhibition on ancient Greece that will travel to China in 2008. The *Guardian* praised the BM’s work in China and elsewhere: ‘It’s a different kind of foreign policy – one which puts our humanity at its heart.’

Africa

Building on shared bodies of knowledge, exhibitions such as *Hazina: Traditions, Trade and Transitions in Eastern Africa* profit from local expertise to fashion displays best suited to individual communities. Much more than temporary showcases, they provide an enduring legacy of training and assistance. *Hazina*, a Swahili word meaning ‘treasures’, ran initially in Nairobi from March to September 2006, and was a collaboration between the BM and the National Museums of Kenya, whose own curator drew on the UK collection to explore centuries of cultural contact in eastern Africa, from southern Sudan and Ethiopia to Congo, Tanzania and Mozambique. *Hazina’s* popularity led to an extended run and the overall programme’s success prompted a new Memorandum of Understanding with Kenya as a result of the country’s wish to build on its relationship with the BM. It is hoped that such programmes of building capacity for museums in sub-Saharan Africa will enable them to host more exhibitions from the global north and participate more fully in the international museum community.

*International tours*

Home-grown exhibitions also enjoy an afterlife abroad. *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia* followed its enormous success in London with a
**Egyptian afterlife**
The year saw the largest loan of Egyptian artefacts that the BM has ever made. On display at California’s Bowers Museum until 2008, *Mummies* explored the afterlife in ancient Egypt through objects such as the outer coffin of Seshepenmehyt (right) and a model of a servant fanning food (left).

**Fabric of a Nation**
Wax-print textiles are an important aspect of the culture of modern Ghana. Some derive from older Indian and Indonesian designs, others are inspired by contemporary life in Africa.

‘The British Museum’s Africa Programme . . . [is] entirely congruent with long-term diplomatic and development goals.’

Demos report on ‘Cultural Diplomacy’, 2007
showing at La Caixa Forum in Barcelona from March to June 2006. In 2006/7 Mummy: The Inside Story took its ‘virtual’ Egyptian mummy from Mobile, Alabama to Tokyo. It travelled to the Kobe Museum in March 2007. Temples and Tombs: Treasures of Egyptian Art from the British Museum is an exhibition co-organised with the American Federation of Arts. It opened in Oklahoma before travelling to the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville, Florida. Next year it tours to Raleigh, Albuquerque and Fresno. Mummies: Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt features the largest such collection ever to leave the BM. The display illustrates the fascinating story of how Egyptians prepared and sent the dead into the afterlife and is on long-term loan to the Bowers Museum in California until 2008.

International partners

Partnerships with colleagues across the world enable cultural development and wider involvement with communities across the globe. The BM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the government of Ghana in August 2006 to foster a variety of exchanges and joint projects. The first of these was a pair of simultaneous exhibitions – one in London, one in Accra – to mark the 50th anniversary of Ghana’s independence. At the BM, the Asahi Shimbun Display Fabric of a Nation: Textiles and Identity in Modern Ghana showed how the rich varieties of printed cloth, so important to Ghanaian culture, map a history of the country’s social and political concerns. In March 2007 the President of Ghana visited the exhibition, in which one could see printed fabrics depicting akonfiona, the sword of kingship, or Kwame Nkrumah in 1957, celebrating the independence of the Gold Coast and the founding of Ghana. The collaboration is part of the BM’s ‘Africa Programme’, supported by the DCMS. It involves joint field research in Ghana and the development of two new collections, one at the University of Ghana at Legon, the second at the BM.

The BM is working extensively in west Africa, furthering its reach through new professional partnerships. A collaboration with the National Museum of Mali is working with contemporary...
Archaeology in Africa
Fieldwork in the Sudan (above and right) included excavation, training and skills sharing with colleagues from Khartoum. The site between Berber and Abidiya is under threat from redevelopment.

‘Another priority region is Africa where the British Museum is able to share its collection – and knowledge – of African art, while helping to strengthen African museums.’

*International Herald Tribune, June 2006*
craftsmen to build two parallel collections of gold jewellery and textiles, one in Europe, one in Africa. A similar project is underway in Senegal. The West African Museums Programme worked with the BM in September 2006 to provide workshops to train trainers in managing photographic archives and museum collections. Issues ranged from intellectual property rights to digitising historic documents. Twelve west African countries participated, including Liberia and Sierra Leone. The result was a west African team well placed to build its own network of trainers who will work to improve the preservation and management of museum collections and photographic archives across the region. Equally wide-ranging, a project on ‘Money in Africa’ is working with partner museums in east and west Africa to provide specialist training on the preservation of coins, as well as with scholars from across the world on improving the research base and scholarly networks for the subject. Other work in east Africa included a workshop in Mombasa, Kenya and a training course and conference in Zanzibar.

From October to December 2006, the BM worked with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan, on a joint training and excavation project along the banks of the Nile. The large site between Berber and Abidiya is under threat from redevelopment and new irrigation projects. Archaeologists from the BM carried out rescue work on an Amun temple and its associated cemetery in the late Kushite city of Dangeil (3rd century BC – 3rd century AD). Among the finds, over a million bread moulds used in temple rituals have been uncovered. The work was accompanied by training in archaeological excavation, analysis and fieldwork for colleagues from Khartoum.

On the Ilha de Moçambique, the country’s former capital, the BM is working with Mozambican colleagues to restore the oldest surviving building, assisting with conservation surveys and long-term preservation plans. In the Pacific, fieldwork with local women on Vanuatu continued (funded by the AHRC), while on the northwest coast of Canada, First Nations have joined the BM to study contemporary culture in the region. Other work ranged from a study with Royal Holloway College of the landscape context of Inca shrines in the Andes to a joint
‘Neil MacGregor . . . is recasting this institution’s purpose to serve not just Britain but the world. Few collections have the scope and scale of the BM to challenge one of the greatest myths of our time – that civilisations are discrete entities that “clash” . . . Rather, the BM can illustrate how civilisations are knitted together in a myriad of connections and are run through by common human preoccupations.’

Madeleine Bunting in the Guardian, March 2007

Global training and research projects are carried through in the BM's work in London. The International Curatorial Training Programme brings together curators from around the world for a five-week course of cultural and academic exchange. Participants gain access to the collections, curators, conservators and other experts at the BM and its UK partners, but are also encouraged to share their own expertise and experience with BM colleagues, who are keen to learn from them. The first summer school took place in July and August 2006, with curators from Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, China and South Africa. The 2007 programme is already oversubscribed, and it is hoped that the programme can be expanded to meet the needs of museum colleagues around the world, making the BM's collection in the fullest sense a resource accessible to all.

BM international
The BM's presence abroad included a visit to Iraq by John Curtis, Keeper of the Middle East collection, to survey sites at risk from military activity. Here, coalition solders are given a tour of Ur (above left).

West Africa Museums
The BM's West Africa Museums Programme (left) forges new ties in the region. Colleagues from twelve west African countries took part in a professional training programme in 2006.

International BM
In 2006, the BM welcomed young museum curators from China, Iraq, Sudan, Egypt and South Africa as part of its annual International Curatorial Training Programme (above).
**British Museum across the continents**

**ITALY: Turin**
Excavations at Babylon in the 19th century uncovered this ceramic figure of Europa. It may date from as early as the 3rd–2nd century BC. It was one of 37 objects shown in Turin to examine Alexander the Great’s legacy in Asia, from Seleucia to Gandhara.

**USA: St Louis**
This malagan helmet mask travelled to North America alongside two sacred figurines of a man and a woman from the BM’s Pacific collection. They were displayed as part of the exhibition, *New Ireland: Art of the South Pacific.*

**PERU: The Andes**
The ushnu was a stepped platform that featured widely across the Andean empire of the Incas. In a collaboration with Royal Holloway College, the BM will be on site to look at their construction, placement and function in the landscape of South America.

**SUDAN: The Nile**
Training and excavation went hand in hand in fieldwork along the Nile. Over a million bread moulds were uncovered from an Amun temple from the late Kushite city of Dangeil, a site presently under threat from redevelopment. The work was in partnership with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan.

**MALI: Bamako**
Traditional craftsmanship endures in the work of contemporary makers. Working with the National Museum of Mali, the BM is acquiring a new collection of gold jewellery and textiles alongside a parallel collection being formed in Mali, one of several continuing projects in west Africa.

**SCOTLAND: Glasgow**
Over two million people visited the redesigned Kelvingrove Museum in 2006/7. Under the BM’s Partnership UK scheme, a long-term loan of 84 artefacts created a stunning new ancient Egyptian gallery.
INDIA: Bhojpur
Temples dominated the landscape of India between the 7th and 13th centuries. A joint research project with SOAS and Cardiff University is examining medieval Hindu temples as centres of religious life, socio-economic power and artistic production.

MALAYSIA: Kuala Lumpur
For the Islamic Arts Museum, the BM has provided 17 pieces of Iznik pottery on long-term loan. These included dishes and a blue-and-white mosque lamp with text honouring the Prophet Muhammad.

CHINA: Beijing
The BM’s international partnership with China is opening up a new era of cultural exchange. Three major exhibitions took rare objects such as the Snettisham gold torc to audiences in China, Japan and Korea. A selection of China’s terracotta warriors will travel to London this September.

ZIMBABWE: Harare
In December 2006, the BM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. Alongside new professional ties, the BM hopes to maintain a cultural dialogue between countries across the globe.

IRAN: Tehran
Middle East Now was the BM’s season of exhibitions and events designed to promote understanding of the Middle East. It drew extensively on the BM’s ties in the region, which include supporting the National Museum of Iran in its complete catalogue of Sasanian coins.

AUSTRALIA: Melbourne
Paris ventured to Melbourne in a series of prints and drawings by Camille Pissarro. The BM loaned several works by the celebrated French artist, which included images of the French countryside and this lithograph of the Place du Havre in Paris.
Appendices
Management and finance

The British Museum actively deploys its financial and management resources for the benefit of people in London, the United Kingdom and the world.

A number of generous donations were received during 2006/7, increasing our income from these sources to £3.7m from £2.5m last year. The apparent reduction in trading income is a result of the change in contractual arrangements with our new caterer, Do & Co from Vienna, which now means the BM reports profit only in the income line. The underlying performance was very strong, with returns from international loans and corporate partners showing the best growth. The exhibition income increased as a result of the success of the Michelangelo Drawings exhibition, the most successful temporary exhibition in recent years. Investment gains have improved as the Trustees have developed a broader investment portfolio to grow reserves in preparation for the capital developments.

The BM used £3.2m of its unrestricted revenue reserves this year as part of the Trustees’ plan for future investment in the building, including gallery improvements, infrastructure improvements and the start of the work to develop a new world conservation and science centre and special exhibition space on site in London.

The BM acquired new items for the collection valued at £2.9m, compared to £2.3m last year.
### Summary of Museum's finances

#### Income 2006/7 £m
- Grant from the government: 43.0
- Commercial trading: 12.4
- Exhibitions, loans and guides: 4.9
- Donations and legacies: 3.7
- Investment income and rent: 1.9
- Investment gains: 3.3
- Less: restricted income carried forward: (1.7)
- Less: income allocated to capital expenditure: (8.6)
- **Total**: 58.9

#### Expenditure 2006/7 £m
- Care, research and conservation: 30.7
- Public access and events: 16.6
- Charitable trading: 3.2
- Fundraising: 0.7
- Commercial trading operations: 10.9
- Investment management: 0.2
- **Total**: 62.3

Net expenditure from unrestricted revenue reserves: (3.4)

This summary of the BM’s finances for 2006/7 is unaudited. The audited report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2007 will be available on the Museum’s website, thebritishmuseum.ac.uk and copies may be obtained by writing to the Director of Administration, The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG.
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**Previous page**

Behind the scenes

Beyond the public display areas, BM staff and others work in a variety of facilities, such as the Prints and Drawings study room.
Lead members of the
BM’s Partnership UK
scheme

Belfast, Ulster Museum
(National Museums
Northern Ireland)

Birmingham Museum and
Art Gallery

Bolton Museums, Art
Gallery and Aquarium

Bowes Museum

Bradford Museums,
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Museum

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Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre,
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Tyne and Wear Museums
York Museums Trust
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