Works of art by renowned artists from the past century will feature in the new British Museum touring exhibition *Living with art: Picasso to Celmins*, which reflects important artistic developments during this period in Europe and America. Spanning almost one hundred years of modern art, this exhibition will showcase highlights from the wide-ranging collection of Alexander Walker (1930–2003), longstanding film critic for London’s *Evening Standard* newspaper, bequeathed to the British Museum in 2004.

Covering the period from 1908 until 2002, *Living with art* will include 30 prints and drawings by prominent artists ranging from Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse to Lucian Freud, Bridget Riley, David Hockney and Vija Celmins. This is the first exhibition in over ten years to focus on Walker’s collection, and many of the works of art included will be going on public display for the first time in thirteen years.

Beginning at the British Museum in January 2020, the exhibition will proceed to tour the UK between April 2020 and May 2021 as part of the Museum’s National Programmes, giving those outside of London the opportunity to view these rarely displayed artworks. Themed sections ranging from early twentieth-century modernism and abstraction to relief printing and self-portraiture will demonstrate the astonishing quality and breadth of Walker’s collection. In addition, *Living with art* will focus on a running thread in the collection: transitional pieces that demonstrate well-known artists developing a new style, subject or technique.

Highlights of the exhibition include an early etching by David Hockney titled *Jungle Boy*, inspired by a friend who kept pet snakes and an indication of Hockney’s developing humorous style. A further highlight is a charcoal drawing of a hooded figure by Philip Guston from 1968, an important transitional composition and early depiction of the Ku Klux Klan theme, and an oil pastel by the Irish/American artist Sean Scully, purchased by Walker after he encountered Scully’s work on his first visit to the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin.

In life, Walker surrounded himself with works from his collection on every inch of the rooms in his Maida Vale flat, including his kitchen and bathroom. A prolific collector of
modern and contemporary prints and drawings, Walker generously left his collection of over 200 works on paper to the British Museum following his death, after developing an interest in the Prints and Drawing department. The acquisition of these works has significantly expanded the Museum’s collection of modern and contemporary Western graphic art and is one of the most important bequests in recent years. The exhibition coincides with the publication of Living with Art: the Alexander Walker Collection, the first full catalogue of Walker’s gift.

Through displaying key pieces, the exhibition will demonstrate Walker’s interest in the working method of artists – he viewed the collection as a record of his own education in art history. Living with art will also demonstrate his own tastes, from the figurative to the abstract, and consider what motivates collectors like Walker, who bought for pleasure rather than financial gain, to surround themselves with works of art.

Catherine Daunt, Hamish Parker Curator of Modern and Contemporary Graphic Art says, “This exhibition reflects key moments in the history of art in Europe and America in the twentieth century. It also demonstrates the extraordinary range of the British Museum’s collection of modern and contemporary prints and drawings, which has developed largely due to the generosity of donors such as Alexander Walker. Walker had a wonderful eye and was able to assemble a remarkable collection despite his relatively modest budget. His collection gave him great pleasure during his life and it was his wish that it would be widely seen, studied and enjoyed by as many people as possible after his death.”

A British Museum touring exhibition Living with art: Picasso to Celmins will be on display at the British Museum in Room 90a from 14 January until 5 March 2020, Winchester Discovery Centre between 4 April and 28 June 2020, Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery from 3 August until 4 October 2020, F. E. McWilliam Gallery and Studio, Northern Ireland from 17 October 2020 until 30 January 2021 and will finish at National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin between 20 February and 30 May 2021. Generously supported by the Dorset Foundation in memory of Harry M Weinrebe.

Notes to editors

A British Museum touring exhibition Living with art: Picasso to Celmins will be on display:

- British Museum, London
  14 January – 5 March 2020
- Winchester Discovery Centre
  4 April – 28 June 2020
- Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery
  3 August – 4 October 2020
- F. E. McWilliam Gallery and Studio, Northern Ireland
  17 October 2020 – 30 January 2021
- National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin
  20 February – 30 May 2021

The fully illustrated catalogue Living with Art: the Alexander Walker Collection, by Catherine Daunt with foreword by Stephen Coppel, will be published by The British Museum Press. Paperback, £20.

#LivingwithArt
The Department of Prints and Drawings
The Department of Prints and Drawings contains the national collection of Western prints and drawings, in the same way as the National Gallery and Tate hold the national collection of paintings. It is one of the top three collections of its kind in the world. There are approximately 50,000 drawings and over two million prints dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century up to the present day.

The collection is available to the public through the Study Room and through a programme of temporary displays, touring exhibitions and loans.

The British Museum's National Programmes
The British Museum has a national presence, working with hundreds of partner organisations across the UK each year through its wide-ranging National Programmes activity. This includes single-object Spotlight Loan tours, touring exhibitions, Partnership Galleries, as well as both short-term and long-term loans, with the lead support of the Dorset Foundation in memory of Harry M Weinrebe. In 2018/19, over 2,800 objects were loaned to 147 venues in the UK, reaching 10.5 million people outside London. National Programmes also facilitates knowledge exchange programmes and trainee schemes to help young people to break into the museum profession. The Museum will continue to develop partnerships across the UK as part of its commitment to sharing the collection as widely as possible.

Follow updates on the exhibition via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @britishmuseum
For more, follow the British Museum blog at blog.britishmuseum.org

Further information
Contact the Press Office: communications@britishmuseum.org / 020 7323 8794 (or 8583/8594)