

One of the largest Ming porcelains from the British Museum will go on loan outside of London for the first time

A British Museum Spotlight Loan *A Ming Emperor's seat*

- Manchester Museum (7 February – 19 April 2020)
- Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle (25 April – 19 July 2020)
- Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (25 July – 18 October 2020)

Press images: <https://bit.ly/335gSdS>

Generously supported by the Sir Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art

One of the **largest porcelains** in the Sir Percival David Collection held at the British Museum, a beautiful glazed blue and white garden seat dating from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), is set to tour the UK in 2020. This marks the **first time that the seat has been lent to an external venue in the UK**, presenting a rare opportunity to view the object outside of London as part of the British Museum's National Programmes.

Travelling to museums in **Manchester, Newcastle** and **Exeter**, a variety of programming will be on offer at each venue to coincide with the British Museum Spotlight Loan, ranging from bespoke workshops to community engagement and lectures for university students. Each venue will display *A Ming Emperor's seat* in a different context, ranging from the seat's botanical connections to other cultures from around the world, utilising each museum's own collections.

The garden seat was made for the court of the Wanli Emperor (r.1573–1620), one of the **longest reigning of all the Ming dynasty emperors**. Crafted in Jingdezhen, the porcelain capital of China for over a thousand years, the seat gives an invaluable insight into Chinese court culture. Measuring nearly half a metre high, the large hollow seat may have been moved from inside court to the surrounding gardens, reflecting the needs of court life. The object features blue dragons surrounded by clouds, waves and a flaming jewel. Dense patterns of leaves and flowers ornament the sides which are pierced with intricate rings. The use of a dragon is significant because in China, dragons are used as an auspicious motif and as a shorthand symbol for the emperor himself.

The Spotlight Loan follows on from the **tenth anniversary** of the arrival on long-term loan of the Sir Percival David Collection at the British Museum. During this ten-year period, the Spotlight Loan is only the second time that an object has been lent from the Sir Percival David Collection, following a loan of one of the 'David' vases to the Shanghai Museum in 2012. One of the **foremost assemblages of Chinese ceramics in the world**, the Collection comprises some 1,700 objects, primarily ceramics dating from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, spanning a thousand years. The businessman and philanthropist, Sir Percival David (1892–1964) built up this extraordinary collection

between 1914 and 1960, and was eager for his love of Chinese ceramics to be shared with a broad audience.

Jessica Harrison-Hall, Head of China Section at the British Museum says: “Thanks to the generosity of the Sir Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, we are able to turn the spotlight on to this magnificent porcelain dragon seat and share it with three wonderful museums, their visitors, local and university communities.”

Maria Bojanowska, Dorset Foundation Head of National Programmes says: “We are very excited to be working with museums across the UK to share the highlights of the British Museum's collection. This spectacular porcelain masterpiece will utterly enchant visitors and hopefully make new connections with the excellent Chinese collections at our partner museums.”

A British Museum Spotlight Loan *A Ming Emperor's seat* will be on display at Manchester Museum from 7 February until 19 April 2020, Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle between 25 April and 19 July 2020 and at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter from 25 July until 18 October 2020. Generously supported by the Sir Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art.

Notes to editors

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Whilst the Sir Percival David Collection is displayed at the British Museum, the ownership of the Collection resides in the Sir Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, an independent body with its own Trustees.

#EmperorSeatTour

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.

Sir Percival David Collection

Sir Percival David (1882-1964) built the finest private collection of Chinese ceramics in the world. He came from the wealthy Sassoon banking family, based in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, and settled in London in 1913. His passion for China inspired him to learn Chinese well enough to translate 14th-century art texts. His business took him across East Asia where he purchased many of his best ceramics.

David was a committed philanthropist and gave money towards establishing the first public display of Chinese ceramics at the Palace Museum in Beijing. He was determined to use his own collection to inform and inspire people and to keep it on public view in its entirety. Today

the Sir Percival David Foundation Trustees continue his mission by lending the collection to the British Museum and allowing this rare item to travel around the UK for the first time.



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For more, follow the British Museum blog at blog.britishmuseum.org

Further information

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High resolution images and caption sheet available at <https://bit.ly/335gSdS>