

British Museum and Sketchfab collaborate for the first time on a touring exhibition

A British Museum Spotlight Loan

Troy: beauty and heroism

- Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, Reading (21 September – 12 December 2021)
 - Haslemere Educational Museum, Surrey (10 February – 8 May 2022)
 - The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum (19 May – 14 August 2022)
- Generously supported by the Dorset Foundation*

Press images: <https://bit.ly/37luiWY>

Sketchfab links:

Urn: <https://bit.ly/3luZknz>

Amphora: <https://bit.ly/3AOrjmN>

A British Museum Spotlight Loan *Troy: beauty and heroism* is set to tour the UK in 2021 and 2022, following on from the major BP exhibition *Troy: myth and reality*. Key objects from the exhibition will be accessible to audiences around the UK as part of the British Museum's National Programmes. Specially created **3D scans will provide close access to the objects, a first for the Museum's touring programme**. These will be available through a collaboration with Sketchfab: visitors will be able to access the objects on their devices through QR codes and for viewing at home, reflecting the ever-increasing value of digital content.

Helen and **Achilles** are central characters to the story of the Trojan War; the young Greek queen Helen is the **most beautiful woman in the world**, whose abduction by the Trojan prince Paris triggers the ten year war, whilst the short but glorious life of Achilles is the tale of one of the **greatest Greek heroes**. Offering representations of what it means to be a man and woman, debated from antiquity up to the modern day, each are fascinating and complex figures in their own ways.

Focusing on significant moments from the lives of Helen and Achilles through the themes of beauty and heroism, four objects will tour to **Reading, Surrey and Dundee** between **September 2021 and August 2022**. The Spotlight Loan features an Etruscan urn, **which has never been on loan before**, portraying Helen's abduction by the Trojan prince Paris, whilst an Athenian amphora shows the brutal side of Achilles. These ancient objects are supplemented with artworks by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) and Pietro Testa (1612–1650). This touring show will convey key moments in the story of the Trojan War that define the lives and character of these two figures, as interpreted by ancient and modern artists.

Continuing the legacy of the recent major *Troy* exhibition will be a **2,500-year-old**, striking black-figure pot made in Athens and found at Vulci in Italy. The amphora is remarkably well preserved and portrays key figures from the Troy story. One side depicts the body of Trojan prince Hector dragged and defiled in revenge by Achilles for killing his lover Patroclus. By an error of drawing, Achilles appears with his upper body behind and legs in front of a mound, which represents the tomb of Patroclus. The other side of the amphora depicts the messenger god Hermes with the goddesses Athena and Aphrodite as they prepare for the Judgement of Paris, the Trojan prince who chose Helen as his prize, triggering the Trojan war.

An **Etruscan funerary urn** with exquisite detail dating from around 125BC–100BC also joins the tour from the major exhibition. Portraying Helen's embarkation for Troy, the young woman is led away from Greece by attendants. Loaded onto the ship alongside a vase, she seems to be just another piece of cargo, with Paris seated and looking at his prize.

Supplementing these two ancient objects will be **Testa's *The birth and infancy of Achilles*** (c.1648-50), an exclusive addition to the Spotlight Loan and an object which has never been seen on tour before. Comprising a composite scene of episodes from Achilles' early life, the etching features his mother, the sea goddess Thetis, dipping the young Achilles into water from the river Styx in an attempt to make him immortal. Crucially, she holds him by the heel, leaving a vulnerable spot which will eventually kill him.

Rossetti's *Cassandra* (1861, reworked 1867) is another exclusive for the Spotlight Loan. A study for a painting that was never completed, it shows Helen surrounded by the Trojan characters whose lives are disrupted or cut short as a consequence of her relationship with Paris. Portraying the moments before Hector's doomed last fight, it dramatises the scene from the Trojan perspective. The drawing shows the prophetess Cassandra in anguish as the fate of her brother Hector looms. She has predicted his death but cannot prevent it, as she is destined never to be believed. Helen arms a carefree Paris for battle whilst he lounges; from her furious expression, it seems clear that Cassandra has condemned her actions. Paris, appearing amused by the situation, attempts to soothe Helen by patting her on the back. This is a less sympathetic interpretation of Helen, looking to the devastation she will cause.

Co-curator of the exhibition, Victoria Donnellan says, "Following the success of the *Troy* exhibition at the British Museum, it is very gratifying to be able to bring an exciting selection of related objects to audiences around the UK thanks to the Museum's National Programmes. The ancient story of Helen and Achilles is a fascinating one and I'm so pleased we can portray the various facets of beauty and heroism through these rich objects, especially with the 3D offering."

Thomas Flynn, Cultural Heritage Lead & Community at Sketchfab says, "The British Museum has been sharing 3D models of its collection with the world since 2014, garnering millions of views and the largest following on Sketchfab of any museum. This latest collaboration for *Troy: beauty and heroism* is a wonderful example of how online 3D can help cultural organisations reach and engage with national and international audiences in modern and forward thinking ways."

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Notes to editors

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#TroyBeautyHeroism

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 2019/20, over 2,800 objects were loaned to 105 venues in the UK, reaching 10 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.



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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/37luiWY>