

Press release
**British Museum
exhibitions
2023–24**

Please note that exhibition titles and dates for late 2023 and 2024 are subject to change and should be checked with the press office before publication.

LONDON, 17 October

Exhibition highlights 2023–24

- **Burma to Myanmar** 2 November 2023 – 11 February 2024
- **Legion: life in the Roman army** 1 February – 23 June 2024
- **Michelangelo: the last decades** 2 May – 28 July 2024
- **The silk roads (title tbc)** 26 September 2024 – 23 February 2025

Special exhibitions

Burma to Myanmar

2 November 2023 – 11 February 2024
The Joseph Hotung Great Court Gallery

Supported by Zemen Paulos and Jack Ryan

Interconnected yet cut-off, rich in natural resources but with many of its people living in poverty, Myanmar is a country that defies categorisation. This exhibition offers the chance to see the history behind the headlines.

Experiencing decades of civil war and now ruled again by a military dictatorship, Myanmar – also known as Burma – is an isolated figure on the world stage today, and its story is relatively little known in the West. However, the extraordinary artistic output of its peoples, over more than a millennium of cross-cultural interactions and political change, attests to its pivotal role at a crossroads of Asia.

Bringing together extraordinary objects, including the UNESCO Memory of the World gold- and ruby-studded letter sent by King Alaungpaya to King George II in 1756 and an exquisitely embroidered wall hanging illustrating scenes from the Ramayana, the exhibition explores how Myanmar's interactions through trade, faith and empire-building have shaped the country's histories over the past 1,500 years.

Legion: life in the Roman army

1 February – 23 June 2024
The Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery, British Museum

Supported by Graham and Joanna Barker, Hugh and Catherine Stevenson and Christian Levett

This major new exhibition explores the everyday life as part of the force which allowed Rome to keep and control its vast empire.

Protecting a superpower for over half a millennium, the imperial Roman army acted as a military, naval and police force to around a quarter of the Earth's population. However, life for the majority of those serving was surprisingly domestic, with many living in settled military communities stretching from Scotland to the Red Sea.

Legion will share the stories of real soldiers and will challenge some of the modern perceptions about what it meant to be a Roman soldier by showing the army was as much an engine of social change as a formidable war machine. Recruits came from almost all walks of life and joined to advance themselves, a regular job with a pension for some and for others the transformational chance to acquire Roman citizenship. Many supported families despite a general ban on marriage for ordinary soldiers at the time.

Made up of over 200 objects including loans from 28 lenders, the large scale of the exhibition enables contributions from a wide collection of national and international institutions, as well as supporting material from the collection. It features iconic Roman military objects alongside evidence of the real lives of men, women, and children – citizens and non-citizens, free or enslaved – in forts and frontiers across the empire.

Michelangelo: the last decades

2 May – 28 July 2024

The Joseph Hotung Great Court Gallery

In 1534, Michelangelo left Florence for Rome, never to see his native city again. He was 59, which many contemporaries regarded as old, but for Michelangelo this move marked the beginning of a dramatic new chapter which would fundamentally shape his experiences as an artist and as a man.

This exhibition looks at the last 30 years of Michelangelo's remarkable life, when his return to Rome brought him new commissions and reunited him with some of his closest friends. Forceful preparatory drawings for the monumental *Last Judgement* fresco as well as the newly conserved cartoon of the *Epifania* will be displayed alongside studies for Michelangelo's grand architectural projects, including the rebuilding of St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Intimate letters, poems and drawings will offer powerful insights into his faith, relationships and experiences of old age.

The silk roads (title tbc)

26 September 2024 – 23 February 2025

The Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery, British Museum

This major exhibition explores a pivotal period in the history of the 'silk road'. Going beyond the idea of the silk road as a simple trade route between 'East' and 'West', it follows how the journeys of people, objects and ideas shaped cultures and histories in the period AD 500–1000. This rich story of connection spans Afro-Eurasia, from Japan to Britain, highlighting the fruits and perils of cross-cultural exchanges while inspiring reflections on global connections today.

Free displays

The genius of nature: botanical drawings by Jacque Le Moyne de Morgues

19 September 2023 – 28 January 2024

Room 90a

One of the most gifted botanical artists of his age, Le Moyne (about 1553–88) created remarkable watercolours of plants, flowers, fruit and vegetables which captivate the eye with

their extraordinary naturalism. As a Protestant, Le Moyne was persecuted in his native France and later moved to London, where he settled along with many fellow Huguenots. His work attracted the attention of Sir Walter Raleigh, who may have introduced Le Moyne to other figures at the Elizabethan court, including Lady Mary Sidney.

The British Museum has 50 botanical drawings by Le Moyne, originally part of an album created for Lady Mary. This display presents a selection of the watercolours, intended to be admired not only for their scientific accuracy but also for their aesthetic beauty.

Ed Ruscha: roads and insects

19 September 2023 – 28 January 2024

Room 90a

This display of prints by American artist Ed Ruscha (b. 1937) focuses on his interest in the physical world around him. *Insects*, a portfolio of six colour screenprints, depicts life-sized flies, ants and cockroaches. The display also includes seven etchings from 2001, *Los Francisco San Angeles*, in which Ruscha creates imaginary maps that intersect the principal roads of LA and San Francisco, and two prints from the 2014 series, *Rusty Signs*, which appear to comment on the fading of the American Dream.

Aged just 18, Ruscha moved from Oklahoma City to Los Angeles, where he has been based ever since. The journey along Route 66 would become very familiar to him over years of travelling back and forth. Roads, cars, gas stations, signs and billboard advertisements have occurred frequently in Ruscha's art across a variety of media including painting, printmaking, photography, drawing and film.

Admonitions of the instructress to the court ladies

5 October – 15 November 2023

8 July – 18 Aug 2024

Room 91a

This masterpiece is considered a milestone in Chinese painting history. Traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi (about AD 345–406), it probably dates to between AD 400 and 700. To ensure its preservation it is only displayed for six weeks each year.

The Admonitions Scroll depicts a poetic text composed by an official Zhang Hua (about AD 232–300) aimed at correcting the behaviour of an empress. The British Museum purchased the Scroll from Captain Clarence Johnson (1870–1937) who was in Beijing in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901). Originally a handscroll, the painting and later inscriptions were separated and mounted onto panels in 1914.

Gesture and line: four post-war German and Austrian artists

From the Duerckheim Collection

5 October 2023 – 1 April 2024

Room 90

This display explores the work of four artists who spearheaded the practice of drawing in the post-war years.

From the 1960s drawing assumed a prominent position among a rising generation of post-war artists in Germany and Austria. This exhibition examines works on paper by four of these artists, still comparatively little known in the UK.

The work of the three German artists – Rudi Tröger (b. 1929), Karl Bohrmann (1928–98) and Carl-Heinz Wegert (1926–2007) – is characterised by a quiet introspection and they largely

shunned the limelight of the art world. The Austrian Hermann Nitsch (1938–2022), by contrast, attracted public controversy through his highly provocative performances, or 'Actions', involving nudity, blood and Christian symbolism.

This exhibition celebrates a major recent gift of 67 works on paper to the British Museum from the collection of Count Christian Duerckheim.

Superb line: prints and drawings from Genoa 1500–1800

5 October 2023 – 1 April 2024

Room 90

This display puts the spotlight on Genoa, an artistic powerhouse that rivalled Venice, Florence and Rome. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, the port city was one of Italy's major artistic centres and among the wealthiest cities on the Italian peninsula, with strong trade links across Europe and beyond.

These links and the riches they brought made Genoa a desirable destination for painters and sculptors wanting to study or find lucrative work. *Superb line* opens with works by the first major arrival, Raphael's pupil Perino del Vaga. Over the next 150 years the city continued to attract even bigger names such as Rubens and Van Dyck. This constant injection of new blood kept Genoa at the cutting edge of new artistic trends, creating a nurturing environment for homegrown talents to develop. Featuring highlights from the British Museum's holdings of Genoese prints and drawings, this display celebrates the virtuosity and originality of the city's artists.

The Asahi Shimbun Displays

The Asahi Shimbun Displays are a series of regularly changing displays that allow the Museum to showcase important objects, to create small exhibits of topical interest and to learn more about improving the future display of objects elsewhere in the Museum. These displays have been made possible by the generous sponsorship of The Asahi Shimbun Company, who are long-standing supporters of the British Museum.

The Asahi Shimbun Displays

Making their mark: women silversmiths of Oman

19 October – 17 December 2023

Room 3

This display celebrates three entrepreneurial Omani women silversmiths from different generations, showcasing their beautiful silver creations. Their personal testimonies highlight their knowledge and technical skills, as well as their dedication to and passion for their profession in a region where silversmithing is usually done by men. The last two decades have witnessed a revival of the craft as the women have adapted centuries-old silver jewellery designs to contemporary tastes.

Making their mark presents the results of fieldwork carried out from 2019–2022 as part of an ongoing, all-women-led research project launched by the British Museum in collaboration with scholars from Oman, Canada and the USA. Scientific analysis conducted at the British Museum using a digital microscope and scanning electron microscope presents close-up images of the pieces. These images reveal the variety of production techniques, tools and skills used by the women to create their intricate designs. The display also features iconic examples of 1950s Omani silver jewellery from the collection at the British Museum.

The British Museum across the UK: National Touring Exhibitions

The British Museum works with partner museums and galleries in every part of the UK. The Museum is committed to sharing the collection and our knowledge as widely as possible to create a positive educational, social and economic impact across the UK. Through our programme of touring exhibitions and loans, between April 2022 and March 2023, the British Museum lent more than 1,600 objects to 102 venues around the UK, reaching more than six million visitors outside of London.

A British Museum Touring Exhibition Egyptian hieroglyphs: unlock the mystery

Torquay Museum, Devon: 21 October 2023 – 18 February 2024

In 2023, British Museum National Touring Exhibitions include *Egyptian hieroglyphs: unlock the mystery*, exploring the fascinating story of how hieroglyphs were decoded. This follows the critically acclaimed, blockbuster show at the British Museum, marking the bicentenary of this breakthrough. This family-friendly exhibition incorporates interactive elements to tell the story, introducing visitors to great pioneers like Jean-François Champollion. Objects on display include an extract from the Book of the Dead and a large limestone lintel revealing the name of Pharaoh Ramses III.

A British Museum Touring Exhibition For the curious and interested

Down County Museum, Downpatrick: 20 January – 13 April 2024

Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth: 27 April – 20 July 2024

This touring exhibition will take a collection assembled more than 250 years ago to explore new connections and different perspectives. Using a range of objects, including natural history rarities, books and cultural objects from the collection of physician and naturalist Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), we ask why this collection was created and what this – and other historic collections – can offer to audiences today. Originally held entirely at the British Museum, Sloane's collection is now spread across the British Museum, the British Library and Natural History Museum. With funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council [Sloane Lab](#) project, the touring exhibition will reconnect objects from the original collection to explore stories old and new.

A British Museum Touring Exhibition Drawing attention: emerging artists in dialogue

York Art Gallery: 27 October 2023 – Sunday 28 January 2024

Wolverhampton Art Gallery: 10 February – 6 May 2024

Hartlepool Art Gallery: 18 May – 24 August

Some of the most compelling up-and-coming names in the field of contemporary drawing will be displayed alongside highlight of the British Museum collection in this touring exhibition.

These new acquisitions include some of the youngest artists to be collected by the British Museum, presented alongside works by celebrated artists from Mary Delany, Andy Warhol and Barbara Hepworth to Édouard Manet.

In this surprising and thought-provoking selection, emerging artists are taking the medium of drawing in new directions. A wide range of techniques and practices are represented, including drawings using make-up on face wipes by Sin Wai Kin, to a drawing made with chalk collected from the White Cliffs of Dover by Josephine Baker.

This tour has evolved from an exhibition at the British Museum. Each individual show in the tour will offer a unique experience and new perspective, as each venue adds works from their own collections, making meaningful connections with those from the British Museum.

Supported by the Dorset Foundation in memory of Harry M Weinrebe.

Notes to editors

The British Museum

Founded in 1753, the British Museum was the first national public museum in the world. The collection tells the stories of cultures across the world, from the dawn of human history, over two million years ago, to the present. Objects range from the earliest tools made by humans and remarkable finds from the ancient world to more recent acquisitions from Africa, Oceania and the Americas, the Middle East, Asia and Europe, as well as the national collections of prints and drawings, and coins and medals. In addition to work in London, the Museum takes part in an extensive programme of loans and tours, both across the UK and throughout the world. Research with international impact continues to underpin the British Museum's exhibitions and wider work.

The British Museum is open daily 10.00–17.00, open late on Fridays 10.00–20.30. Last entry 16.00 (19.30 on Fridays).



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For more, follow the British Museum blog at britishmuseum.org/blog or visit the collection on the [British Museum Audio app](#).

Further information and images

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