

## British Museum announces collaboration with artist Hew Locke for major new exhibition

### Hew Locke (title tbc)

17 October 2024 – 9 February 2025

The Joseph Hotung Great Court Gallery (Room 35)

Press images: <https://tinyurl.com/bmhewlocke>

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**LONDON, 12 March:** The British Museum is collaborating with renowned Guyanese-British artist Hew Locke for a major new exhibition exploring how the Museum collection reflects the legacies of British imperial power, from the early modern period to the present day. This exciting co-curated exhibition will include well-known objects from across the collection alongside specially commissioned new works by Locke.

Throughout his career Locke has had an intense fascination with objects and the stories they tell. His interest in the British Museum collection goes back to his days as a student in London when he would visit the Museum of Mankind (where the British Museum's Ethnography Department was housed from 1970 to 1997) to draw from the collections. This will be Locke's first artist-curated museum exhibition, and an opportunity for him to engage more deeply with a museum collection than previously in his career.

The British Museum's history and collections are closely linked to those of the British Empire. The exhibition will examine these histories alongside a consideration of today's often contentious and deeply felt debates around cultural heritage.

Focusing on Britain's historic interactions with Africa, India and the Caribbean, all of which had an impact on Guyana where Locke grew up, the exhibition will be his personal exploration using interventionist techniques to reframe the collection's historical objects.

Locke is interested in exploring the messy and complex ways in which museums are implicated in histories of Empire and hopes to leave visitors with more questions than answers.

**Hew Locke said:** *"I have been visiting the British Museum's collections for 40 years, and this project has enabled me to engage with them in a much deeper way than ever before, and in a way few artists have had the privilege of doing. I have always been interested in the way objects are interpreted through display in museums. What story has been chosen and is being told or implied about the past? How does it relate to the present? How can this telling be questioned, disrupted, or complicated? These are the questions I am tackling through this project."*

*"I want to bring people beautiful objects with awkward histories, and smaller objects easy to walk by, that are just as compelling when you stop and look. There is a fascinating story hidden in plain sight, here and in many other museums across the country."*

**Isabel Seligman, Curator, Prints and Drawings, British Museum said:** *"We're incredibly excited to be collaborating with Hew Locke on an exhibition of this scale. With Locke's compelling artistic vision, insight, and curiosity we hope to offer visitors a fresh perspective on this subject, encouraging conversation about how the collection came into being – and creating a space where dialogue and differing views are welcome."*

**Mark Jones, Interim Director of the British Museum said:** *"In this landmark exhibition we are collaborating with Hew to ask questions and create constructive debate and conversation about the history of the British Museum's collection - engaging our visitors on this topic in a way we have never done before."*

The British Museum has a long tradition of collaboration and co-curation, working with artistic partners to reconsider and recontextualise objects in the collections – most notably with Grayson Perry on *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* in 2011, and Eduardo Paolozzi on *Lost Magic Kingdoms* in 1985.

To curate the exhibition, Hew Locke and his partner and studio curator Indra Khanna have been visiting the British Museum over a two-year period viewing objects in the stores and study rooms and speaking with specialist curators. The themes of the exhibition have been developed collaboratively, reflecting the themes of Locke's work and the Museum's collections. Hew and Indra also used the British Museum's online database of objects, [Collection online](#), to search for objects that spoke to the themes and concerns of Locke's artistic practice.

#### **Notes to editors:**

Locke was born in Edinburgh, UK, in 1959; lived from 1966 to 1980 in Georgetown, Guyana; and is currently based in London.

In 2000 he won both a Paul Hamlyn Award and an East International Award. In 2022 he was elected a member of The Royal Academy of Arts, and was made an OBE in 2023.

His work is represented in many collections including The Government Art Collection, The Pérez Art Museum Miami, The Tate Gallery, The Arts Council of England, The National Trust, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, 21c, The New Art Gallery Walsall, The Victoria & Albert Museum, The Imperial War Museum, The British Museum and The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

The Museum is grateful to Cockayne – Grants for the Arts: a donor advised fund held at The London Community Foundation for their support of the exhibition.



Follow updates on the exhibition via social media  
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#### **Further information**

Contact the Communications team: [communications@britishmuseum.org](mailto:communications@britishmuseum.org)

High resolution images and caption sheet available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bmhewlocke>