Museum explorers
colour and shape

Families
Ages 3+

The Hamlyn family trails are supported by

THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST
Welcome

This trail guides you on a journey of exploration and discovery around the Museum. On the way you'll track down some amazing treasures and learn tales of human history. Whichever way you go, and whatever you discover, enjoy yourself! If you ever feel lost, just ask a member of staff for help.

Useful information for families

- Accessible toilets and baby changing facilities are available. You can breastfeed and bottle feed anywhere on the Museum’s grounds but if you would like more privacy, please use the feeding room in the Ford Centre for Young Visitors in The Clore Centre for Education on the Lower floor, Level -1, or one of our baby changing spaces. For details, ask at the Families Desk or Information Desk in the Great Court, or pick up a map of the whole Museum.

- You can leave fold-up pushchairs in the cloakroom free of charge.

- You can find child-friendly food at the cafés. High chairs are available.

- You can use the Ford Centre for Young Visitors to picnic with your family at weekends and during school holidays.

Many cultures throughout history have kept their food and water in clay pots of interesting colours and shapes. How do you store your favourite snacks?

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THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST
Embark on a beautiful and bright adventure as you explore the colours, shapes and patterns of Africa. What fascinating things will you find on your way?

Start your journey in Room 24 and go down to Room 25, Lower floor, Level -2. You’ll need to go down a set of stairs to access Room 25. If you have a pushchair please use the lifts located by the Great Court shop.

Case numbers can be hard to find – don’t be afraid to ask a member of staff for help finding an object.

1. Mammy Wata
   Room 25
2. Colourful cloths
   Room 25
3. Slippery serpent
   Room 25
4. Standing tall
   Room 25
5. A flock of knives
   Room 25
6. Vibrant vessels
   Room 25
Go to Room 25, on the Lower floor, Level -2, and find Case 3

Look closely – can you find Mammy Wata and her colourful friends?

I am Mammy Wata. I live underwater. I bring love and life to the world. Let’s use our eyes and imagination to find shapes and colours all around us.

Mammy Wata is a water deity or spirit, celebrated throughout much of Africa.

Find and point to these colours:
- Red
- Blue
- Black
- White

Look closely and find these shapes:
- Triangle
- Circle
- Square
- Diamond
2 Colourful cloths

Look around Room 25 and choose a case filled with colourful textiles.

Sewing and painting with hundreds of colours, people make patterns that make your eyes wander! Now, look closely...

People in Africa have made beautiful textiles like these for centuries and many of the designs have special meanings.

Colours are everywhere. Can you find the colours below on the cloth on display?

- Red
- Purple
- Blue
- Yellow
- Orange
- Brown

These objects are covered in patterns. Look closer and find these shapes:

- Stripes
- Stars
- Triangles
- Zigzags
- Spots
- Squares

Trace one of the shapes in the air with your finger. Can anyone guess what shape it is?
I am the messenger of the water god Olokun. Some say I’m an angry adder, others a protective python. My brass body is slithering down the palace roof. I see you, do you see me?

Find the wall covered in brass plaques nearby and look for the palace plaque to the left of the main display.

Look carefully.
What shape are the spots on my slippery body?

What sound do I make?
The shape of my body looks like a letter of the alphabet. Can you guess which one?

Some say I wiggle, some say I zigzag.
Which do you think I do? Press your hands together and move like me.
Standing tall

Walk back past the gallery entrance and find the large wooden sculpture pictured here.

We are a tower of people and animals. We are not squabbling, we are holding each other up, and together we are stronger!

Time to count!
How many people can you see? How many animals can you count?

Look closely and find:
- A man with a hat
- A spotty leopard
- An animal with horns
- A bird with a blue body

Imagine balancing all those people and animals on your shoulders. Which one would be the heaviest? Which one would be the easiest to carry?
5 A flock of knives

Stay in Room 25 and find Case 18

We are floating in the air and we are formed of many different shapes. Some of us look like leaves, others like beaks. Some look like horns, others like snakes.

Look closely and find:
- The biggest knife
- The smallest knife
- A knife that looks like a flower
- A knife that looks like a bird

How many different shapes can you see? Trace your favourite in the air with your finger.
Vibrant vessels

Find the tower of large pots reaching up to the ceiling nearby.

We are made from decorated clay that has been shaped, smoothed and baked in fire.

Pottery is one of the oldest arts of Africa and in some parts the practice dates back more than 8,000 years.

Look carefully at how we are decorated and find:

☐ Spots
☐ Triangles
☐ Stripes
☐ Spikes

We’re all different shapes and sizes. Which pot is the biggest? Pretend you’re holding it in your arms – what would you put in it?

Now find your favourite!
Talk to your group about why you like it. If you could make your own pot, what colours and shapes would you decorate it with?
You have completed the colour and shape trail!

You can find even more fantastic things to see and do in other parts of the Museum:

- Discover turquoise from Mexico in Room 27
- Uncover gold and silver from Ancient Iran in Room 52
- Hunt for circles, squares and rectangles in Money in Room 68

Head back to the Families Desk to receive a stamp!

Well done. You’ve been busy. What fantastic colours and shapes you’ve found. Mammy Wata will be pleased! Of all the things you discovered, which was your favourite?

Complete the textile design using your favourite shapes and colours.

Other things you could do when you get home:

- Create your own shapes. Can you give your new shape a name?
- Build a paper mosaic with different colour paper squares – make it as colourful as you can!
- Learn to draw Mammy Wata. Can you remember all the colours you’ll need?
Trails in the Museum explorers series

Ages 6+
- Africa around the world
- Ancient Britain
- Ancient Egypt
- Ancient Greeks
- Fantastic creatures
- Journey across Japan

Ages 3+
- Colour and shape
- Time to count

You can find out more about our family activities at britishmuseum.org

See you at the British Museum again soon!

Cover: Globular pottery vase, Nigeria, about 1886.


2. Rachid Koraïchi (b. 1947), silk banner with acrylic paint, 1989. Appliqué tent cloth or tent hanging made of wool or hair, Egypt, before 1928.


4. Carved wooden figure group made by the Igbo people, Nigeria, 20th century.

5. Stylised, copper versions of iron throwing knives, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo, late 19th century.

6. Globular pottery vase, Nigeria, about 1886. Pottery vessel made by the Igbo people, Nigeria. Ceramic beer pot made by the Gisu people, Uganda. At home activity: Appliqué tent cloth or tent hanging made of wool or hair, Egypt, before 1928.