

Call for host partners

Unlocking Ancient Egypt

(title tbc)

A British Museum Touring Exhibition

Supported by the Dorset Foundation

Unlock the mysteries of Ancient Egypt with this family friendly exhibition exploring the history of decoding Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Narrative

The decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822 is often acclaimed as the greatest achievement of Egyptology, allowing us to read the ancient world in a way that had not been possible before. For the first time we could not only understand the colourful signs on the walls of temples and tombs, but also read the letters people sent each other, their poetry and even their hastily created shopping lists.



Limestone ancestor bust of Muteminet, 19th Dynasty © 2021 The Trustees of The British Museum

This tour will explore how the pioneering work of Jean-François Champollion and his peers enabled other academics to make further ground-breaking

discoveries with the Rosetta Stone, uncovering a further 3,000 years of human history.

It is hoped that this Touring Exhibition will provide an opportunity to fully appreciate the significance of the decipherment while gaining a deeper understanding of the significance and beauty of Egyptian hieroglyphs and the way they work.

The tour will follow a major exhibition at the British Museum in 2022 marking the centenary of the decipherment of hieroglyphs. Partners will be given the opportunity to choose the final group of objects from a selection of its highlight objects. This object list will tour to every venue. An indicative longlist can be found below in Appendix 1.

To reach a family and school audience, the exhibition will also have a layer of interpretation that explores the decipherment story through hands on interactives. Partners may also be able to include their own relevant collections too, bringing new contexts and perspectives to the tour.

Key objectives

- Engage families in the fascinating story of decipherment by understanding the ground-breaking decoding of hieroglyphs and the imaginative image-based text that transcends language and will captivate children of every age.
- Link to the 7-11 years old school curriculum and make engaging cross-curricular links including literacy and maths.
- To help visitors make their own meaningful connections with ancient Egyptian voices through enlightening subjects and personal stories.
- To provide an opportunity for partner museums to highlight important regional collections and make meaningful connections with British Museum's collection.

Tour Schedule

The British Museum is looking for three partners to host this Touring Exhibition for around three months each, over 2023 and into early 2024. There may also be the possibility to extend the exhibition to further venues.

Interpretation and design

A package of exhibition interpretation will be provided to all tour partners. It is expected that partners may wish to reconfigure text in conjunction with the British Museum. While it is unlikely that generic interpretation panels will tour, it is possible that the interactive design elements may be reused across venues.

Marketing, publicity and programming

The British Museum will provide several designed marketing assets to venues, creating a consistent yet flexible promotional identity for the tour. Other exhibition and marketing materials must include the British Museum's logo, and logos of any associated sponsors. Press releases and all other materials require sign off input by the British Museum.

We will invite representatives from the touring venues to come together to discuss the tour and opportunities for collaboration. It is hoped that this can be hosted at the British Museum, providing opportunity for collections knowledge exchange in advance of the exhibition tour. British Museum staff may also be available to provide talks or lectures during the exhibition on request.

Display specifications

Partner venues must conform to ACE Government Indemnity standards and have GIS specification display cases available, although it may be possible to borrow showcases from the British Museum. Venues will be asked to provide standard facility, security and display case information by completing UKRG documentation.

Environmental readings of gallery spaces will be requested and the specific environmental requirements for the objects will be confirmed in due course. All in-case materials must be tested or previously approved by the British Museum's Conservation team.

Security

The ACE National Security Adviser will be consulted on security. The objects must be in a gallery with constant invigilation during opening hours.

Shipping and installation

The object will be transported by an approved fine art transport agent and accompanied by a British Museum courier. The exhibition will be installed by the courier with some support required from partner curatorial, conservation and technical staff.

Costs

The British Museum will cover the cost of all staff costs, administration, object transportation; object conservation, packing and mounts, and courier related travel and subsistence for the entirety of the tour. Elements of the design will also be covered by the British Museum, including the exhibition interactives and 2D design templates.

Partners are expected to meet the cost of 2D graphic art working and production, any 3D design and fabrication including showcase furniture specific to their venue, as well as marketing and general programming costs. Venues will be expected to cover the objects under the Minimum Liability arrangements outlined within the Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) guidelines.

Any approaches for additional sponsorship by tour partners must be cleared with the British Museum and the crediting of such sponsorship discussed.

If you are interested in hosting *Unlocking Ancient Egypt*, please complete the short expression of interest form below by Friday 14 January 2022. Once we have a sense of demand, we will request further information before making a final decision on venues.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch:

Maria Bojanowska

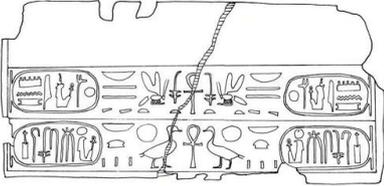
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Appendix 1: Indicative object long list to be refined with partner venues

Please note, this information is confidential and should not be shared publicly

Image	Curatorial comment	Provisional display requirements
	<p><u>Limestone lintel of Ramses III</u> A monumental hieroglyphic inscription that allows us to show how the hieroglyphic writing system works. Champollion initially used royal names in cartouches to decipher hieroglyphs.</p>	<p>Height: 65.50 cm; width: 139.50 cm.</p> <p>Heavy object. Conditioned showcase.</p>
	<p><u>Stela of Horiraa with hieroglyphs</u> After having studied the Rosetta Stone, Champollion expresses the need for other bilingual inscriptions to advance his work on hieroglyphs. This stela can also illustrate how Champollion tests his decipherment on pre-Alexandrian proper names.</p>	<p>Height: 19.50 cm; width: 22 cm; thickness 6.3 cm; weight 3kg</p> <p>Showcase.</p>
	<p><u>Wooden stela depicting Nestjerenmaat</u> After the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799, interest in Egyptian inscriptions accelerated. The request for accurate copies increased as scholars started to work on the decipherment. This stela was copied by Alessandro Ricci, later an important member of Champollion's expedition to Egypt. A reproduction of the watercolour can be shown alongside the object.</p>	<p>Height: 27.50 cm; thickness: 3 cm; width: 25 cm; weight: 0.778 kg</p> <p>Conditioned showcase and low light levels.</p>
	<p><u>Wooden statue group for the parents of Iymhotep with feast list</u> As Champollion was translating the names of 77 pharaohs from before the reign of Ramesses II, he pushed back human history with more than 3000 years. Egyptians were aware of the concept of time and organised it in various ways. Using chronological data, Champollion discovered how the year was divided into seasonal cycles, month, days, and associated festivals.</p>	<p>Height: 28 cm; width: 14 cm</p> <p>Showcase.</p>

	<p><u>Limestone block-statue of Sahathor</u></p> <p>This object also demonstrates ancient reflections of the past. The block statue was invented during the Middle Kingdom, more specifically in the 12th Dynasty, but was copied in later times in reference to classical examples.</p>	<p>Height: 42.50 cm; width: 20 cm; depth: 29 cm</p> <p>Showcase.</p>
	<p><u>Limestone bust of Muteminet</u></p> <p>Whereas Champollion was occupied with royal names and formal ways of writing, recent research of written sources reveal intimate insights into the lives of common people. This object illustrates the practise of personal religion in Egypt.</p>	<p>Height: 51 cm; thickness: 29 cm width: 26 cm</p> <p>Conditioned showcase.</p>
	<p><u>Book of the Dead of Hunefer</u></p> <p>Numerous Book of the Dead papyri were studied by Champollion who also correctly reconstructed many aspects of Egyptian afterlife. Recent research has focussed on the performative aspects of these texts.</p>	<p>Height: 45.7 cm; width: 83.4 cm</p> <p>Showcase and low light levels.</p>
	<p><u>Ostrakon depicting king Ramses IX</u></p> <p>The decipherment of hieroglyphs is also a story of collecting in the age of Empire and the competition between two colonial powers (Britain, France) to compensate political loss with knowledge about ancient Egypt. The ostrakon belongs to the Salt collection (1823), who also contributed to the decipherment.</p>	<p>Height: 48.30 cm; length: 76.30 cm; depth: 7 cm; weight: 30 kg</p> <p>Showcase.</p>
	<p><u>Wooden drawing board with the original grid visible in red</u></p> <p>This drawing board has its grid still in place and shows that scribal training involved copying and trying out individual hieroglyphs.</p>	<p>Height: 53.40 cm; weight: 1 kg; width: 38 cm; depth: 0.80 cm</p> <p>Conditioned showcase and low light levels</p>

Expression of interest

To register your initial interest in the exhibition, please answer the following brief questions:

1. **Name and address of venue**
2. **Proposed space to host the exhibition**
3. **Why do you think your venue is suited to host this exhibition? (max 250 words)**
4. **What impact will the exhibition bring to your venue and audience? (max 250 words)**
5. The exhibition is available for approximately three months at each venue, from approx. February 2023 to early 2024. **Please indicate when your venue will be available to host the exhibition:**

Please submit your expression of interest to **Alice Christen** (achristen@britishmuseum.org) by **Friday 14 January 2022**.