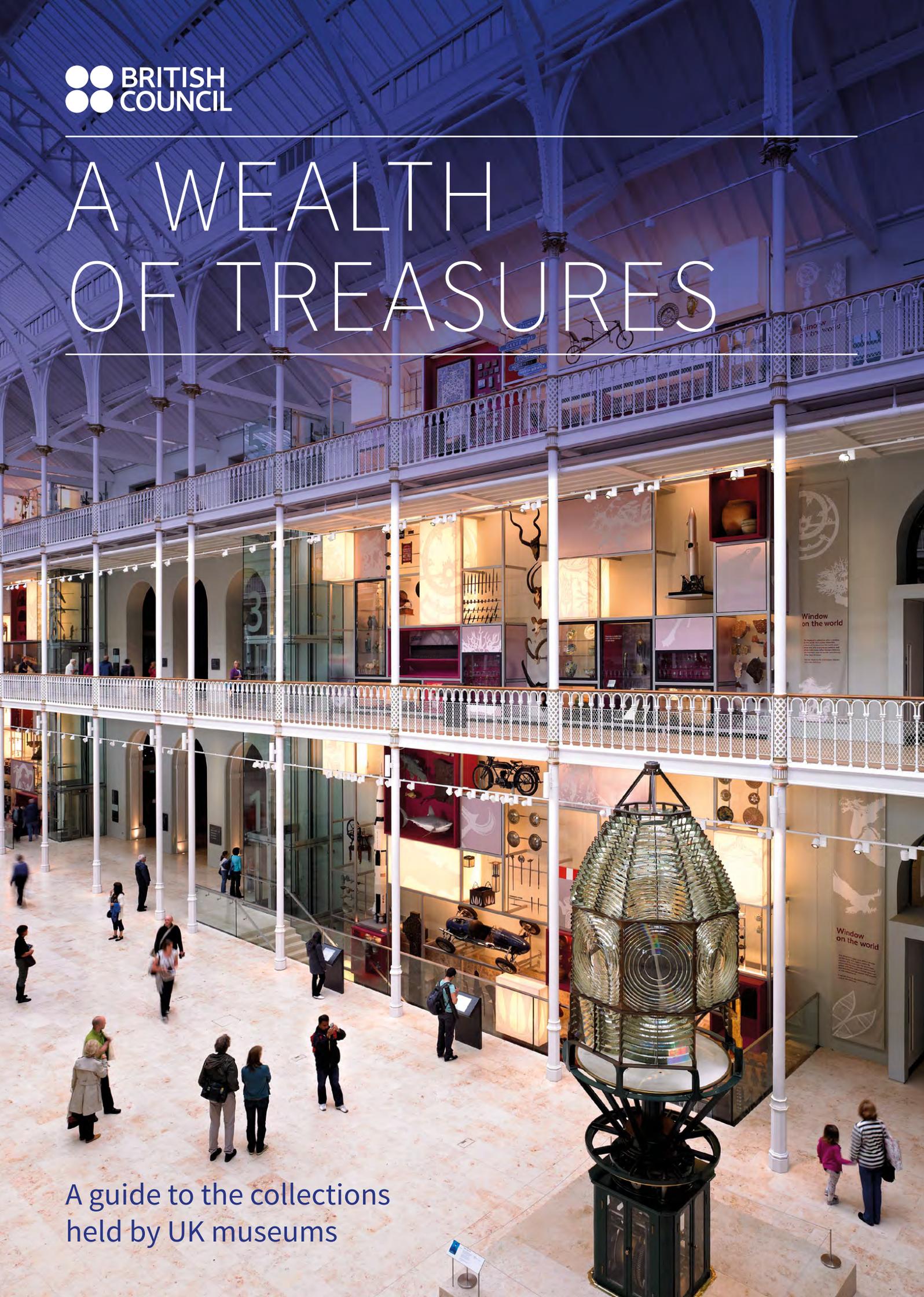


A WEALTH OF TREASURES

A guide to the collections
held by UK museums

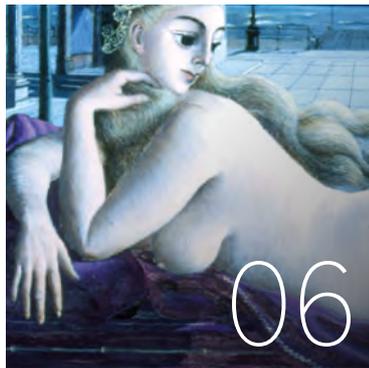


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UK MUSEUMS

UK museums care for some of the world's greatest collections. They are treasure houses, holding internationally important collections of art and contemporary art, social history, fashion, archaeology, science and industrial heritage, and world cultures. Together, these magnificent collections represent the material culture of humanity.



Image: Early Italian Art Gallery © James Hudson

Even though the way we access information has been revolutionised by digital technology, the intrinsic power of the object – whether it is a painting by **JMW Turner** or **David Hockney**, a Roman mosaic or an Ancient Egyptian mummy – remains.

Museums in the UK have a rich history of sharing their collections across the globe and working in partnership to unlock stories. These international relationships, formed through research, staff exchanges, loans and touring exhibitions, ensure UK museum collections are shared with the world.

The first museum in the UK was founded over three hundred years ago. Since then, over 2500

museums have opened in the UK. Today, together they welcome over 100 million visitors a year, many from overseas.

This brochure can only offer a snapshot of the wealth of collections held by museums in the UK. Loans and touring exhibitions from British collections are much in demand, from Russia to China, the USA and Latin America. All the museums in this brochure have experience of managing international touring exhibitions.

To make contact with one of the museums included in this brochure, please contact the National Museums Directors Council touring@nationalmuseums.org.uk.

ART



The UK's art collections provide a visually stunning display of the art of the last 500 years.

The UK is particularly rich in portraits by British artists, including the Pre-Raphaelites, well represented in [National Museums Liverpool's](#) collections, and the iconic paintings of the 18th century English aristocracy by [Joshua Reynolds](#) and [Thomas Gainsborough](#).

British artists have been heavily influenced by trends in European art, with travels from the Netherlands to Italy bringing a rich cross-fertilisation of ideas between Britain and the continent.

Landscapes and seascapes are important traditions

in UK art, from mediaeval landscapes in 15th century images, to the work of [John Constable](#) which conveys the beauty of rural England with paintings suffused with clouds and light, and [JMW Turner's](#) and [George Chamber's](#) masterly marine paintings.

Religious themes and symbolism dominate in the earliest works, from the mediaeval period to the Renaissance. The Protestant Reformation, which moved Britain away from religious art, produced a flowering of new forms capturing the domestic, political, and community aspects of British life. But

IMAGES

Facing page: *Spring (Apple Blossoms)* by John Everett Millais at National Museums Liverpool

This page (CW from top left): *Sunset at Éragny-sur-Epte* by Camille Pissaro at the Ashmolean Museum; *Peace – Burial at Sea* by JMW Turner at Tate Modern; *The Random Shot* by Sir Edwin Landseer at Bury Art Museum; *The Tears of Saint Peter* by El Greco at The Bowes Museum



the legacy of this early art continues to be seen in the work of 20th century painters such as **Stanley Spencer**.

UK collections hold iconic paintings by most of the leading Western European artists, including **Holbein**, **Goya**, **Monet**, and **van Gogh**, but also

hold significant collections of art from China, India and the Middle East.

The Ashmolean Museum holds an important collection of Mughal Indian miniatures, and art from China, Japan and Korea, as well as European art.

FEATURED COLLECTIONS

The Ashmolean Museum ashmolean.org; The Bowes Museum thebowesmuseum.org.uk; Bury Art Museum buryartmuseum.co.uk; National Museums Liverpool liverpoolmuseums.org.uk; Tate Modern tate.org.uk/tate-modern

CONTEMPORARY ART



The UK's contemporary art collections reflect both the best work of major painters associated with Britain including **Francis Bacon**, **Lucian Freud**, **David Hockney** and **Frank Auerbach**, and a strong commitment to international collecting. Both the ground-breaking Britart movement and artists whose work is founded in the more traditional practice are well represented.

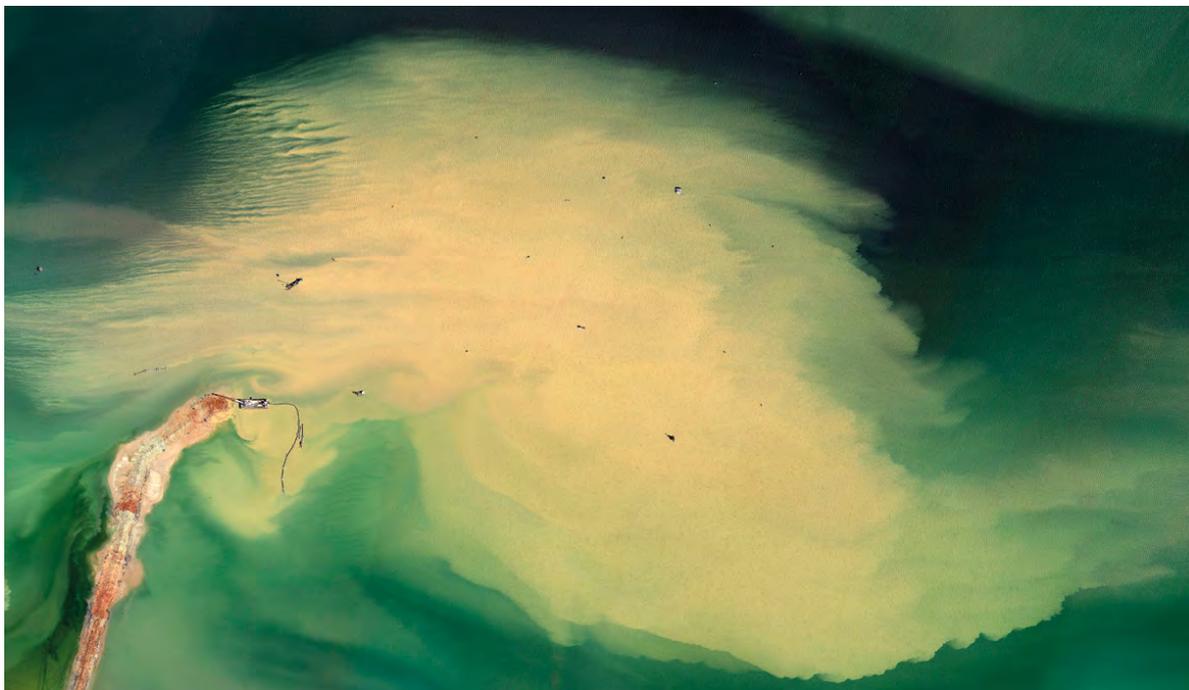
FEATURED COLLECTIONS

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery brightonmuseums.org.uk; The Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art cfcca.org.uk; University of Salford salford.ac.uk; Southampton Art Gallery southampton.gov.uk/museums; Tate Modern tate.org.uk/tate-modern; Whitworth Gallery whitworth.manchester.ac.uk; York Art Gallery yorkartgallery.org.uk

IMAGES

Facing page: *A Siren in Full Moonlight* by Paul Delvaux at Southampton Art Gallery

This page (CW from top left): *Cedar Point Oil Field, Harris County Texas* by Mishka Henner at University of Salford; *Difficult Childhood* by Grayson Perry and *Mae West Lips Sofa* by Salvador Dali, both at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery; *Three Cups* by Julian Stair at York Art Gallery



Particularly innovative are installations by artists such as **Cornelia Parker** and works by **Grayson Perry**, who uses traditional craft techniques such as ceramics and tapestry to cast an ironic reflection on contemporary issues. **Southampton Art Gallery's** collection of contemporary art includes Surrealism and Post-Impressionism. The **Whitworth Art Gallery** in Manchester is committed to collecting contemporary art which plays with a variety of media.

Tate Modern is the most popular museum of international modern and contemporary art in

the world and its contemporary art collection is representative of artists working across the world, from Brazil to Asia and Europe to the USA. **The Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art** in Manchester has a unique collection of contemporary Chinese art, with material drawn from Taiwan and Hong Kong as well as mainland China.

The Centre of Ceramic Art at **York Art Gallery** holds an internationally important collection of British studio ceramics. Begun in the 1920s, contemporary collections include work by world class potters such as **Bernard Leach** and **Edmund de Waal**.

DECORATIVE ART



Many collections of design and the decorative arts were first acquired in the Great Exhibition of 1851, a Victorian global showcase and explosion of creativity.

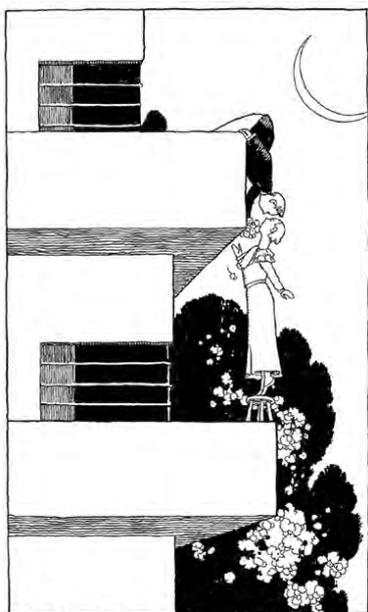
FEATURED COLLECTIONS

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery birminghammuseums.org.uk; Dorman Museum dormanmuseum.co.uk; The Heath Robinson Museum heathrobinsonmuseum.org; National Museum Scotland nms.ac.uk; Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums twmuseums.org.uk

IMAGES

Facing page: Ceramic tiles by William de Morgan at [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](#)

This page (top left to bottom right): Egg boiler and stand by Christopher Dresser for Hukin & Heath at the [Dorman Museum](#); Collection of buttons at [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](#); *Romantic possibilities in modern flats* by WH Robinson at [The Heath Robinson Museum](#); Silver cup by Newcastle Handicrafts and Lightbulb by Joseph Swan at [Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums](#)



ROMANTIC POSSIBILITIES IN MODERN FLATS

Collections now held in UK museums range from the impressive art of the Celts, from torcs to elaborately decorated swords, the exquisite embroidery of the Tudor period, the 18th century furniture and textiles of stately homes, to beautiful, industrial design aimed at a mass domestic market such as the work of designer **Christopher Dresser** whose work is well represented at the [Dorman Museum](#).

Decorative art also absorbed the influence of other cultures, those of India, China and the Middle East. Chinese pagodas and dragons are found on mass produced plates from Staffordshire. Islamic motifs and designs were influential from the 1840s onwards, with the turquoises, blues, greens and reds of Turkey introducing new, striking designs to Victorian households. Leading designers like **Owen Jones** and **William de Morgan**, whose work is held at [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](#), were heavily influenced by the Islamic world. Thus the decorative arts reflect a two-way conversation with the world. [Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums](#) is among the institutions with world collections of decorative design: it holds an extensive collection of Chinese and Japanese ceramics, metalwork and lacquer.

Into the 20th century, decorative arts were influenced by movements including Art Nouveau and Modernism. The UK leads the world in the art of silversmith and [National Museums Scotland](#) is among those collecting the work of contemporary craftspeople.



FASHION



From the costume of internationally famous film and rock stars, such as Vivien Leigh and David Bowie, to uniforms and work clothes, the UK's fashion collections combine beauty, glamour and social history. Together, they offer a comprehensive survey of style over the last four hundred years, from gloves made in the time of William Shakespeare to haute couture from the collections of leading contemporary fashion designers.

FEATURED COLLECTIONS

The Fan Museum thefanmuseum.org.uk; Fashion Museum Bath fashionmuseum.co.uk; Victoria & Albert Museum vam.ac.uk

IMAGES

Facing page: Balldress by David and Elizabeth Emanuel c.1982; embroidered waistcoat c.1615; jacket designed by Lucien Lelong and worn by Vivien Leigh c.1948, all at [Fashion Museum Bath](#)

This page (CW from top left): Electric blue long cotton shirt and plastic quilted jacket ensembles by Craig Green, chosen as Dress of the Year 2015 at [Fashion Museum Bath](#); Embroidered wild silk evening dress by Cristóbal Balenciaga at the [Victoria & Albert Museum](#); Folding palmette type fan (opens two ways) with ivory monture at [The Fan Museum](#)



Accessories are well represented, including shoes, hats, handbags, and jewellery. [The Fan Museum](#)'s collections include sumptuous rococo folding fans, extravagant feather fans of ostrich, eagle and birds of paradise.

Two museums especially exemplify the breadth of UK fashion collections: the [V&A](#), which holds the largest and most comprehensive collection of dress in the world and the [Fashion Museum](#) in Bath which has been evolving a specialist collection for 50 years. The V&A also offers a rolling programme of touring exhibitions with subjects ranging from Indian fabrics to Italian style since 1945. Particularly rich areas of the V&A's 75,000-strong

collections are early woven silks from the Near East, European and Chinese tapestries, and important examples of 17th century European men's and women's dress.

In 2016, the Fashion Museum launches the first of three exhibitions telling the history of fashion in 100 objects. Since 1963, the museum has chosen a 'Dress of the Year', to celebrate iconic new design. Beginning with an outfit by 1960s 'Swinging London' designer **Mary Quant**, the most recent award has been to **Craig Green**'s 2015 blue plastic quilted jacket. World collections stretch back even further, including the world's oldest dress from pre-dynastic Egypt.

ARCHAEOLOGY



The UK's landscape holds many evocative monuments to a distant past – from the prehistoric temple of Stonehenge, to the 80 mile long Hadrian's Wall, built by the Romans as frontier control. UK museums hold millions of finds associated with this landscape – from Stone Age axes to Viking metalwork and jewellery.

FEATURED COLLECTIONS

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery birminghammuseums.org.uk; British Museum britishmuseum.org;
Durham University Oriental Museum dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum; Fitzwilliam Museum fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk;
Manchester Museum manchester.ac.uk/museum; Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery tulliehouse.co.uk;
Valance House Museum lbbd.gov.uk/residents/leisure-libraries-and-museums/valance-house

IMAGES

Facing page: Staffordshire Hoard at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

This page (CW from top left): Egyptian Mummy Mask and China Ding Ware Bowl, both at Durham University Oriental Museum; Roman amber finger ring at Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery; Mayan carved head at Manchester Museum; Pieces of Saxon coloured drinking vessel glass at Valence House Museum



The Roman world is well represented with armour, mosaics and sculpture and personal objects including amulets and handwritten curses. [Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery](#) holds collections from prehistory to early modern times; Roman material includes a unique Roman amber finger ring carved with the head of the goddess Minerva.

The UK also holds remarkable examples of world archaeology from the great civilisations of Greece, Egypt and the Middle East. The [Oriental Museum](#) at the University of Durham holds a wealth of objects from Egypt - from monumental sculpture to woven sandals. The [Fitzwilliam Museum](#) holds objects

from major civilizations and empires of the Ancient Near East, from Persian earrings to reliefs from the palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud in Iraq.

From the earliest flints from Africa, to some of the first surviving works of art, the [British Museum's](#) collections are the unparalleled result of three centuries of collecting. The British Museum's curatorial expertise utilises modern scientific innovation – the analysis of bones and seeds and x-ray surveys of Ancient Egyptian mummies – to shed new light on ancient culture and reveal hidden secrets.

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE



The UK has been at the heart of the discoveries, innovations and life-changing inventions which have created our modern world. From 'hardware' such as planes, tanks, mining equipment and ships, to 'software', including letters, drawings and paintings, UK collections illustrate the genius and energy which changed the lives of millions.

FEATURED COLLECTIONS

D-Day Museum ddaymuseum.co.uk; Museum of the Order of St John museumstjohn.org.uk;
National Coal Mining Museum ncm.org.uk; National Museums Scotland nms.ac.uk; National Railway Museum nrm.org.uk;
The Science Museum sciencemuseum.org.uk; The Wellcome Collection wellcomecollection.org

IMAGES

Facing page: Dolly the Sheep, the first mammal cloned from an adult cell, at [National Museums Scotland](#)

This page (top left to bottom right): A Royal Navy white ensign flag from a Landing Craft which took part in the D-Day landings and a German minefield warning sign from Juno Beach, both at [D-Day Museum](#); *Bulls-Eye Davy Flame-Safety Lamp* by John Newman at [The National Coal Mining Museum](#); Army ration biscuit, posted from the Western Front by St John Ambulance Brigade member, Henry Charles Barefield at the [Museum of the Order of St John](#); *Miners Setting Props* by Harold White at [The National Coal Mining Museum](#); Leprosy poster from 1950s India at [The Wellcome Collection](#)



Paintings such as Joseph Wright of Derby's *Orrery* capture the fascination and awe which attended the first scientific experiments in the 18th century; 20th century collections document Watson and Crick's discovery of DNA.

International innovation, from computers to spacesuits, is also well represented. [The Wellcome Collection](#) has a global collection of medicine through time, including the health cultures of Islamic and Chinese societies, and 19th century European struggles against infectious disease. Its collections reflect the big questions that affect all cultures, such as illness, mortality and the ethics of new technologies. It also holds the world's first medicine chest and collections of modern scientific photographs.

The hardware of industrialisation is represented by steam and electric trains at the [National Railway Museum](#) and planes at [National Museums Scotland's](#) Museum of Flight. Engineering and technology from the 19th and 20th centuries are featured at the [National Coal Mining Museum](#) and the mechanisation of war is well represented at the [D-Day Museum](#) at Portsmouth including the landing craft essential to the success of the D-Day landings.

[The Science Museum's](#) modern collections include electronics, information and computing, mechanical computing, media technologies, and networks including the internet. It reflects modern discoveries and interpretation of science, from Star Wars to the Space Age.

WORLD CULTURES



Museums across the UK hold collections which tell the story of the world. At their heart are often artifacts collected on early European voyages of exploration and discovery.

The world cultures collection at the [Royal Albert Memorial Museum](#) includes artefacts from the 18th century Pacific voyages of discovery by Captain Cook, Captain Bligh and Captain Vancouver.

Many UK museums hold world collections of international importance, including [Brighton Museum and Art Gallery](#)'s Burmese, Sierra Leone and Pacific collections, and the [Horniman Museum](#)'s unique collection of musical instruments from around the world. The oldest instrument is over 3000 years old - a pair of bone clappers in

the form of human hands made in Egypt around 3500 years ago – and the collection also features contemporary electric guitars and synthesizers.

Objects frequently reveal the complexity of relationships between cultures, such as shoes from the Arctic made from cloth originally traded by the East India Company and Islamic ceramics influenced by the demands of the Chinese market.

Museum collections also hold the last examples of now vanished European cultures.

IMAGES

Facing page: *Bolxuaam, Big-Mouth Fish* sculpture by Michael Homerang at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery

This page (CW from top left): Headdress for a telek dance costume made by *Pak Redha* from Bali, lyre used in Eritrean healing ceremonies and a jacket for a pearly king of Dulwich by *Frederick Victor Booth* all at Horniman Museum and Gardens; Painted Russian spoon at Haslemere Educational Museum; Bifacial wooden staff from James Cook's second voyage to Easter Island and *Portrait of an African* att. Allan Ramsa, both at Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery

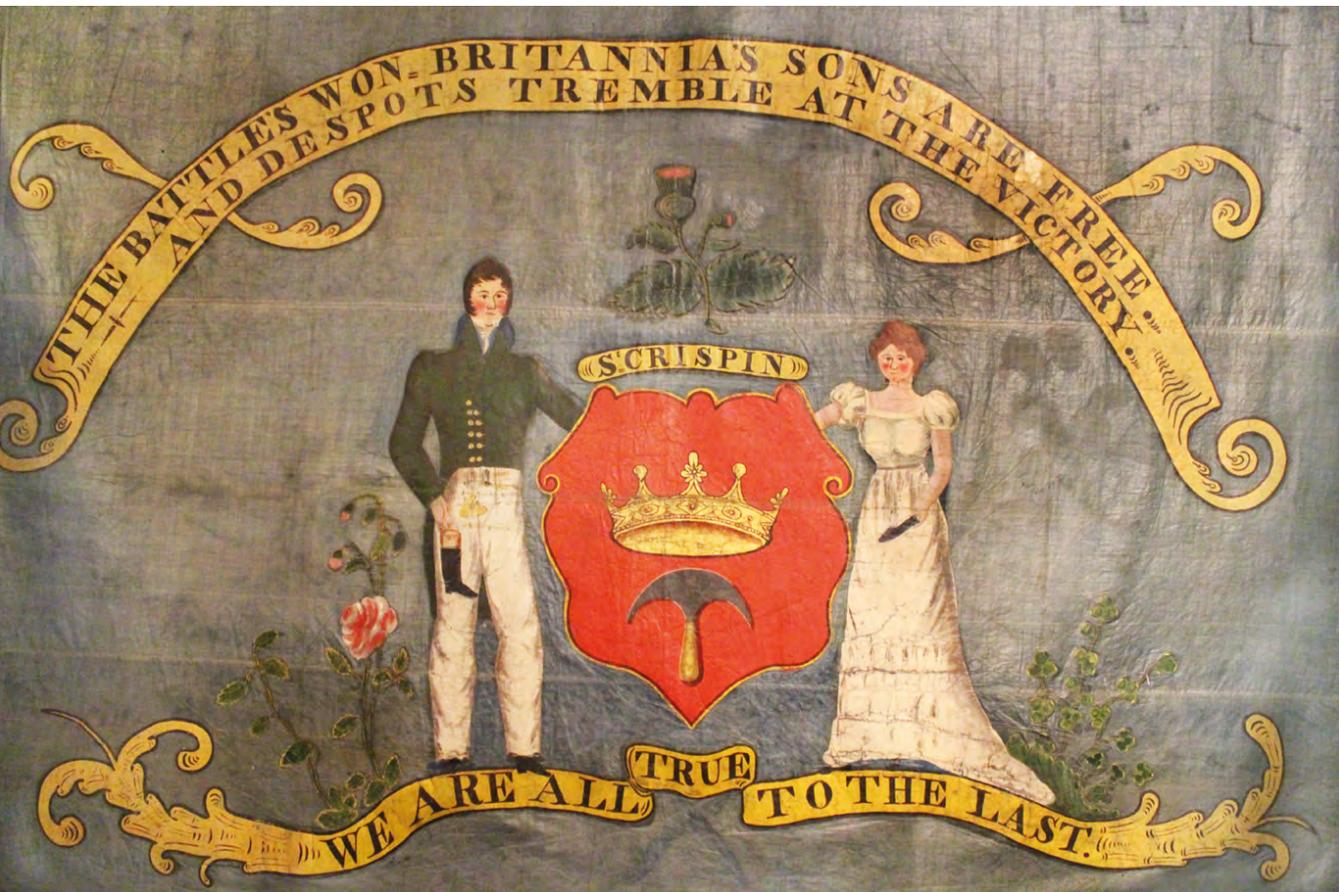


Haslemere Museum holds over 800 costumes from across Europe, including Hungary, Sweden, Romania, Russia and Norway, and a significant collection of household goods and artifacts, beautifully carved from wood and bone.

FEATURED COLLECTIONS

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery brightonmuseums.org.uk; Haslemere Educational Museum haslemeremuseum.co.uk; Horniman Museum and Gardens horniman.ac.uk; Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery exeter.gov.uk/ramm

SOCIAL HISTORY



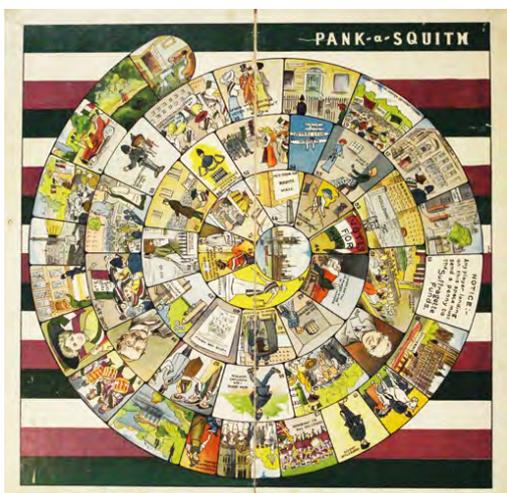
UK museums' wide-ranging collections reflect the evolving history of the UK and the diverse stories and experiences of its people and provide a window on how ordinary people have lived their lives over successive generations. Workers, soldiers, political agitators, housewives and schoolchildren are all represented, with collections ranging from popular culture and entertainment, working life, politics and public health.

FEATURED COLLECTIONS

Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum lisburnmuseum.com; People's History Museum phm.org.uk;
Royal Welsh Fusiliers Museum rwmuseum.org.uk

IMAGES

Facing page: Shoemakers banner celebrating passing of first parliamentary Reform Act in 1832 at the People's History Museum
 This page (CW from top left): *Rats shot in trench* sketch by David Jones and the medals of Lt Col Doughty Wylie VC CH CMG, both at the Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum; Detail from *'Flax to Fabric'* Collections poster at the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum; *Pank-a-Squith* designed to teach people about issues involved in the suffragette campaign at the People's History Museum



There is also a rich archive of documentary and oral history collections, from descriptions of poverty in Victorian London to personal memories of significant historical events, from the outbreak of the First World War to the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics.

The People's History Museum is the largest collection of political material in Britain, and gives a picture of the gradual emergence of democracy. Collections range from the early 19th century radical demands for the vote to election posters and satire in cartoons from the 18th to 20th centuries.

Other museums offer a unique perspective on past societies through the lens of a particular profession. **The Irish Linen Centre** and **Lisburn Museum** tells the story of how textile production dominated parts of Ireland. The damask banner woven for the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876 to celebrate American independence combines a political message with genuine craft skill. **The Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum**, housed in Caernarvon Castle in Wales, describes the life of the British soldier over the last three centuries, from the raising of the regiment in 1689 to modern warfare in Bosnia and Afghanistan.

BRITISH ICONS



Icons of British culture, from the black London taxi to the bowler hat, are recognised around the world. Some have endured for centuries as familiar classics, others, having disappeared from daily use, represent an almost fabled recent past. Meanwhile emerging new icons reflect British contributions to medicine, science and design.

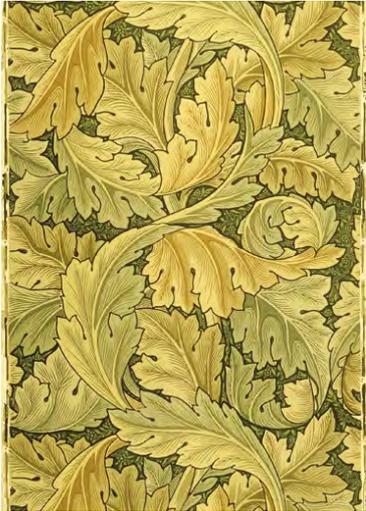
FEATURED COLLECTIONS

London Transport Museum ltmuseum.co.uk; National Football Museum nationalfootballmuseum.com;
National Museums Scotland nms.ac.uk; William Morris Gallery wmgallery.org.uk

IMAGES

Facing page: Diagram showing layout of the registered design of Johnston Underground roundel at London Transport Museum

This page (CW from top left): *Chrysanthemum* wallpaper design by William Morris and *Praising Angel* design by Edward Burne-Jones, both at the William Morris Gallery; *The Nobel Prize for Medicine 1945* awarded to Sir Alexander Fleming for his contribution to the development of penicillin at National Museums Scotland; the *Jules Rimet* trophy at the National Football Museum; Prototype Routemaster motor bus from 1954 at London Transport Museum



With a history spanning 200 years, London's transport network is associated with many design classics. [London Transport Museum's](#) collection includes the Routemaster bus, Harry Beck's iconic Underground map, and posters commissioned from leading artists such as [Man Ray](#) and [Dame Laura Knight](#), showcasing London's many attractions.

The 19th century designer [William Morris](#), a pioneer in merging art, craft and design, produced fresh, colourful patterns for fabrics and wallpapers, eagerly embraced as an alternative to the heavy design of the Victorian period. A century later, many of these designs can still be found in millions of British homes. The [William Morris Gallery](#) holds an important collection of Morris' wallpaper designs.

Football is the much-loved national game and the [National Football Museum](#) holds material relating to its greatest moments. Britain remains proud of having won the 1966 World Cup, and the Jules Rimet trophy is among the museum's most treasured objects.

Collections from [National Museums Scotland](#) capture much of the dynamism of recent invention and scientific discovery. These include the world's oldest surviving colour television, a prototype designed by [John Logie Baird](#), the world's first cloned mammal, [Dolly](#) the sheep, and the Nobel gold medal awarded to [Sir Alexander Fleming](#) for his discovery of penicillin.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to make contact with any of the museums listed in this brochure to discuss their collections, please email the National Museum Directors Council: touring@nationalmuseums.org.uk



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The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Our work in Arts spans architecture, creative industries, dance, design, fashion, film, literature, music, theatre and visual arts linking the best of British creative talent to deliver innovative, high-quality events that provide a showcase for UK artists and companies in new markets.

www.britishcouncil.org/arts

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