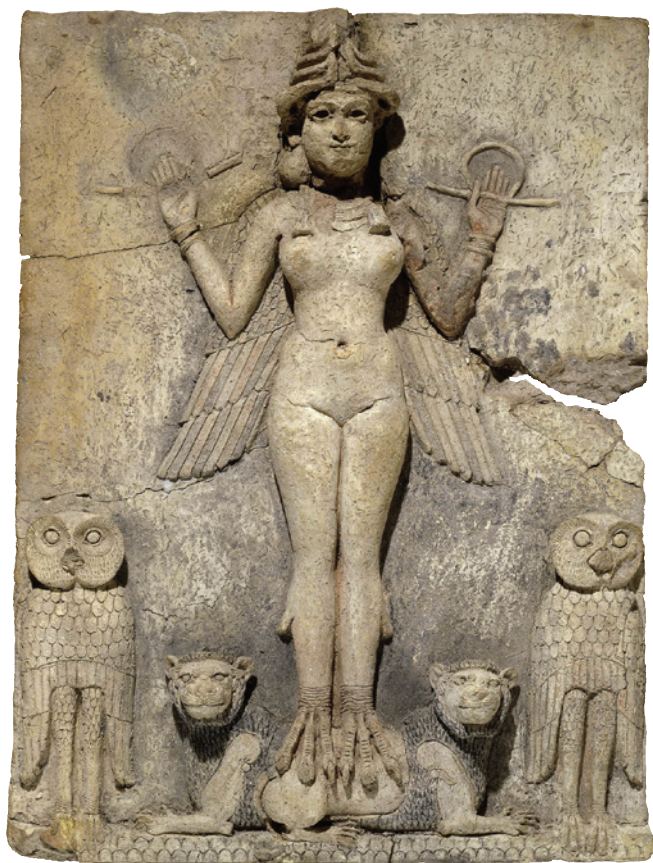


The British
Museum

Desire, love, identity

Follow the LGBTQ
history trail



Exploring LGBTQ histories

This trail highlights 15 objects that have a connection with LGBTQ history. You can download audio commentaries for each of the objects to listen to on your own device. Search for 'Desire love identity' in iTunes, Google Play Music, or Spotify. If you'd rather read about the objects you'll find more information at britishmuseum.org/desireloveidentity

You should be able to complete this trail comfortably in 60 to 75 minutes. The objects have been arranged to create an efficient route. However, you don't need to follow this order, or even see all of the objects.



1

The Discus Thrower

Room 1

This sculpture may have been part of a larger group of statuary. The beautiful youth Hyacinth was struck and killed by a discus thrown by his lover, the god Apollo. The discus was blown off course by the jealous Zephyr.



2

Maori Treasure Box*

Room 1

This intricately carved wooden box features male and female figures intertwined in sexual union. One scene appears to blur heterosexual boundaries and gender roles.



3

Statue of Ganymede

Room 1

In mythology, the god Zeus (or Jupiter) was overcome by desire for the beautiful youth Ganymede. He took the form of an eagle to abduct Ganymede who later became the god's cupbearer.



4

A Maya ruler

East stairs, Ground floor

This image of a male Maya ruler was once assumed to be a woman. He is dressed as a youthful maize deity who combines male and female genders.



5

N'domo masquerade mask*

Room 25, downstairs from Room 24

In many African cultures, gender and gendered roles are fixed through rituals. N'domo masks are worn by men but the masks can be male, female or androgynous.



6

Queen of the Night

Room 56

The Mesopotamian deity Ishtar had the power to assign gender. Some of her cult members seem to have been considered woman-like men who did forbidden things to delight her.



7

Epic of Gilgamesh

Room 56

This famous poem describes how King Gilgamesh and the wild man Enkidu became close friends. The text describes their relationship in erotic terms.



8

Hor and Suty

Room 61

This inscribed stela (stone tablet) is dedicated to two ancient Egyptian men, Hor and Suty. Is it possible that they may have been lovers, or were they twins?



9

The Warren Cup

Room 70

Decorated with two scenes of male lovers, this Roman wine cup could not be displayed publicly for most of the 20th century. Homosexuality was illegal in England and Wales until July 1967.



10

Hadrian and Antinous

Room 70

The beautiful youth Antinous was the emperor Hadrian's lover. When Antinous drowned in AD 130, Hadrian made him into a god and publically commemorated him across the empire.



11

Athenian wine amphora*

Room 69

Intimate sexual relationships between men and youths were an accepted part of life in several ancient Greek city states, particularly in Athens during the 6th-4th century BC.



12

Sappho

Room 69

Although little is known for certain about the Greek poet Sappho's life, her poems gave a voice to female desire that still resonates today.



13

St Sebastian

Room 40

In recent times St Sebastian has become a gay icon inspiring filmmakers, writers and artists. The imagery of him which has become so influential originated in medieval Europe.



14

Ladies of Llangollen

Room 47

Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby fled Ireland together in 1778. They set up home in North Wales, challenging the conventions of the era – and living the life of their choice there for 50 years.



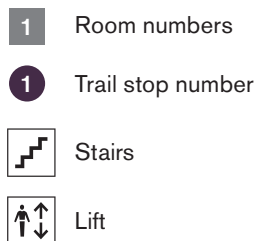
15

The Ain Sakhri Lovers*

Room 51

This object dates from about 11,000 years ago. It is the oldest known sculpture of two lovers. The genders of the figures are unclear and open to interpretation. All that remains is the reflection of their love.

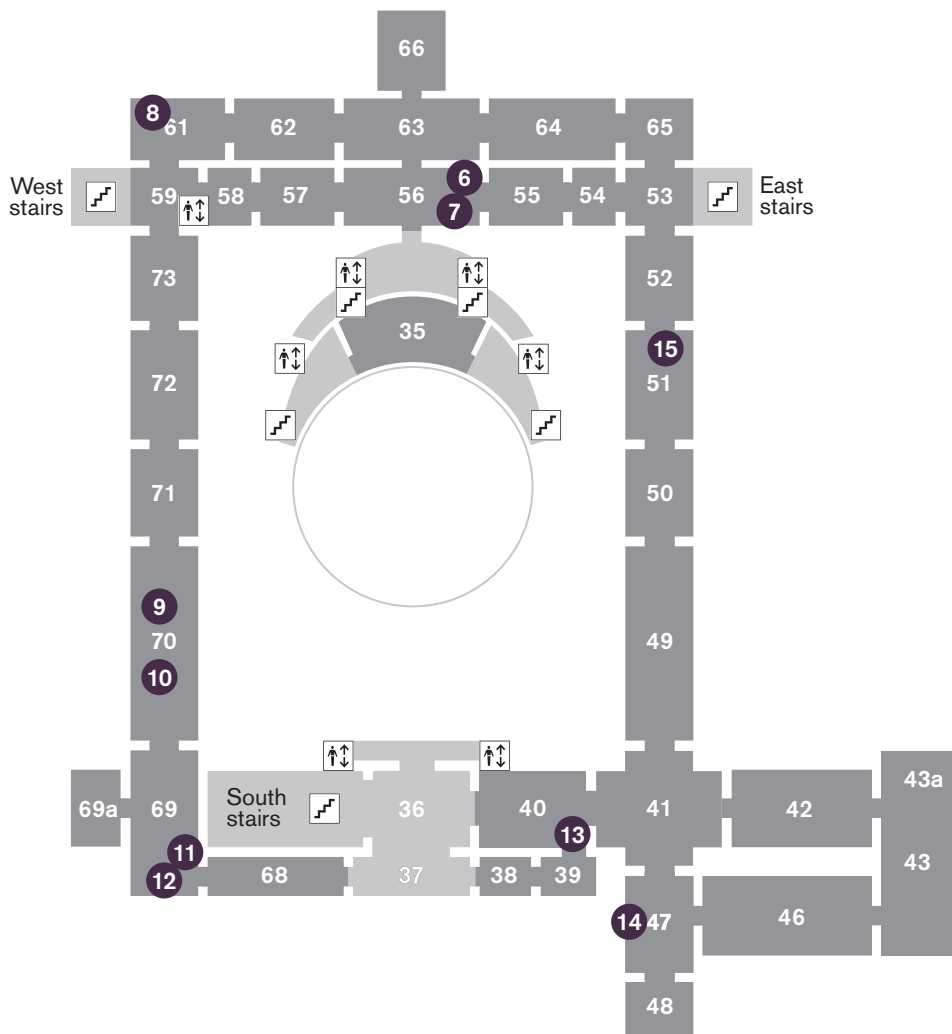
Level 0



This map shows the locations of the objects in this trail. You can pick up a map of the whole Museum at the Information Desk in the Great Court.

Level 3

Level 3



Desire,
love,
identity

explore
LGBTQ
histories

Find out more
online at
[britishmuseum.org/
desireloveidentity](http://britishmuseum.org/desireloveidentity)

Look for this graphic to help you find the objects.

The audio trail is available to stream or download on three services: iTunes, Google Play Music, and Spotify. Search for 'Desire, love, identity' in your streaming service of choice and listen anytime – whether you're at the Museum or not.

Short of time?

If you only have 30 minutes, make sure you don't miss these three objects:



6 Queen of the Night

Room 56

The Mesopotamian deity Ishtar had the power to assign gender. Some of her cult members seem to have been considered woman-like men who did forbidden things to delight her.



10 Hadrian and Antinous

Room 70

The beautiful youth Antinous was the emperor Hadrian's (pictured) lover. When Antinous drowned in AD 130, Hadrian made him into a god and publically commemorated him across the empire.



14 Ladies of Llangollen

Room 47

Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby fled Ireland together in 1778. They set up home in North Wales, challenging the conventions of the era – and living the life of their choice there for 50 years.

Prints and Drawings

The Museum's Prints and Drawings Department holds many works on paper with an LGBTQ connection. You can explore the collection online or make an appointment to view works in the Prints and Drawings Study Room.

Books

A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity across the World

R.B. Parkinson

This book focuses on 40 objects in the British Museum collection, including most of those featured in this trail.

The following books provide more information about individual objects.

The Warren Cup

Dyfri Williams

The Discobolus

Ian Jenkins

The Queen of the Night

Dominique Collon

Please note that the Museum regularly lends objects to other institutions around the world. This means that from time to time, some of the objects that are part of the trail may be temporarily removed from display.

* From approximately 1 August 2018 to late December 2019 these objects will be part of a *Desire, love, identity* exhibition touring four UK venues.

The British Museum
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3DG
britishmuseum.org

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Front: *The Queen of the Night* relief.
Old Babylonian, 19th–18th centuries BC.