

For immediate release

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New Benin display at the Horniman includes returned 'bronzes' on loan

A new display unveiled at the Horniman Museum and Gardens on 7 December features some of the Benin objects returned to Nigerian ownership in 2022 and now on loan to the south London venue.

The Great Kingdom of Benin highlights the rich cultural, creative and political history of the Kingdom, centred around Benin City in modern day Edo State in southern Nigeria. The display has been created in partnership with Edo artists, school pupils in Benin City and people from Nigeria and the UK's Nigerian community in London.

It includes 24 objects – five of them brass plaques known as 'Benin bronzes' – looted from Benin City in 1897, which are on loan from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments of Nigeria (NCMM).

Alongside is a newly commissioned bronze sculpture by Benin artist Osaru Obaseki, titled *Ame / Oyevbamen 'Like Water'*, which has a dynamic design rooted in Edo culture. Made using the same traditional lost wax technique as the historic plaques, this new commission for the Horniman celebrates great women from Edo history and today, and was made possible by Art Fund support.

The objects are displayed against a bespoke backdrop of striking red and white graphic [wallpaper](#), designed by Edo artist 12th The Creator and students at University Preparatory Secondary School in Benin City, with Museum of West African Art.

Also accompanying the display will be a soundscape created by artist tobi Adebajo who worked with the Horniman on the spiritual and healing aspects of the case, and a short film by Eden Igwe which includes footage of Benin City, the iconic Igun Street and an interview with artist Osaru Obaseki.

The opening of the new display marks two years since the formal transfer of ownership of 72 Benin objects from the Horniman to Nigeria on 28 November 2022.

More

The return followed a request made by the NCMM according to the Horniman's Restitution and Repatriation Policy. Of the 72 objects, six were physically returned to Nigeria in 2022, with the rest remaining at the Horniman under a loan agreement.

The Great Kingdom of Benin display replaces the previous display of Benin objects in the Horniman's World.

Korantema Anyimadu, Senior Curator of Anthropology at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, says: 'Over the past year, we're extremely grateful to have collaborated with the Nigerian artists, partners and young people who have contributed to this display. Thanks to their generosity, we can now tell a fuller story of the Great Kingdom of Benin and Benin City today. This important work doesn't stop here and we're looking forward to continuing to interrogate how we exhibit and look after the collections we care for.'

Also on show from 5 December is a complementary exhibition, **Out of Context**, which explores the evolving perception of West African cultural practices. The exhibition features photographs, illustrations and AI-generated images by contemporary West African and diaspora artists – Lagos-based illustrator and designer Osaze Amadasun, photographer Tamibé Bourdagné, and Yellowzine, a London-based collective, online platform and publishing company for global majority artists.

Ends

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Pictured:

- [4391] **Ama (plaque)** made in the 1500s, showing a war chief (right) and royal priest (left) bringing the Oba news of a victory, © National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria, part of The Great Kingdom of Benin display at the Horniman Museum and Gardens.
- **Ame / Oyebamen 'Like Water'**, bronze sculpture by Osaru Obaseki, credit Horniman Museum and Gardens, part of The Great Kingdom of Benin display
- **Bini Playing Card**, digital art 2019, © Osaze Amadasun, from Out of Context at the Horniman Museum and Gardens.

Notes to Editors:

- Objects on loan are displayed in The Great Kingdom of Benin with thanks to the lender, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria.
- The Natural History Gallery closed for redevelopment from Monday 4 March 2024 as part of our [Nature + Love](#) project. The gallery will reopen in 2026.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** was [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](#), the world's largest museum prize.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include a World Gallery of anthropology, music, an acclaimed aquarium, The Studio – a flexible arts and exhibition space, and a natural history gallery (closed until 2026 for redevelopment as part of [Nature + Love](#)). Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk –

set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London.

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- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** relies on income from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and the Café to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of our visitors and donors is hugely appreciated.

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- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.
- On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman’s environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman’s manifesto commitments and progress so far at

horniman.ac.uk/climate.