PRIVATE PATRONS AND PUBLIC MUSEUMS. THE BRITISH MUSEUM STORY

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Chairman of the British Museum Board of Trustees

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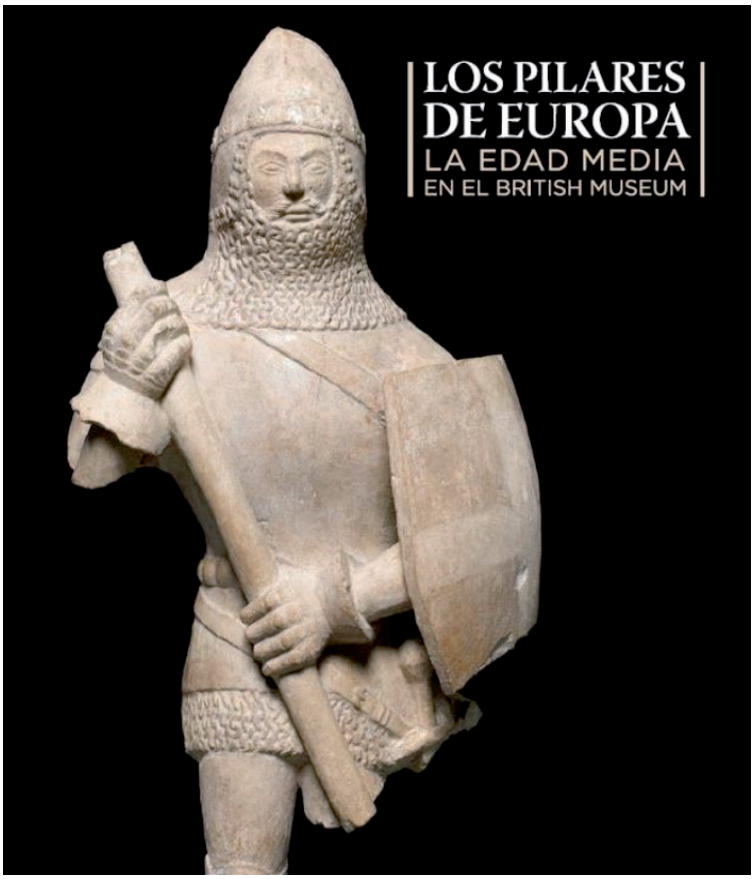


Poster for *Medieval Europe: Power and Legacy at British Museum* exhibition,
at CaixaForum Madrid (October 2016–February 2017)

Private Patrons and Public Museums. The British Museum Story

Sir Richard Lambert

It's a double pleasure for me to speak to you today. The first reason is that this week marks the start of what promises to be a wonderful partnership between "la Caixa" Foundation and the British Museum. We hope large numbers of people will come to see our new exhibition, *Medieval Europe: Power and Legacy*, the first of four such joint ventures to be presented in Spain over the next four years.

The second reason for my pleasure is that "la Caixa" Foundation together with the Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo have a mission and a set of values that are exactly aligned with those of the British Museum. That means we have a very strong foundation for our partnership.

The Foundation is built on the premise that culture has a key role to play in strengthening society, fostering social cohesion and driving social transformation and evolution. For our part, we at the British Museum believe that only by gaining an understanding of the past can we hope to begin to comprehend the world we live in today.

In the words of Neil MacGregor, who stepped down last year as our Director: 'Exploring our shared past is a precondition for building a harmonious future.' That exploration of the past is made possible by museums like ours, and by exhibitions such as that which "la Caixa" is presenting in Madrid today.

Ours is a public museum, supported by the state. It is the UK's number one tourist attraction, offering free entry every year to nearly seven million people from around the world. But it is also a place of serious scholarship and research. And from its earliest days, some 260 years ago, it has benefitted from private patronage of all kinds.

Tonight I would like to explore how that combination between the public purse and private patronage has come about. I will explain why it is – in an age of fiscal austerity and a growing public interest in the past – that private support has never been more important than it is today. And why museums that can tell stories

about our common humanity have a vitally important role to play at a time of growing political friction across Europe and the world.

I'll talk a little about history and a little about some of our generous patrons over the centuries: who some of them were and are, and what lies behind their generosity. I will argue that private patronage is essential to the Museum fulfilling its purpose in the twenty-first century and beyond. And I will suggest that the Museum's core purpose has a vital part to play today in – to quote the mission of the Fundación again – strengthening society, fostering social cohesion and driving social transformation and evolution.

History first. The Museum itself is the embodiment of Enlightenment idealism. The Act of Parliament with which it was founded in 1753 drew on universalist ideas to proclaim that all arts and sciences had a connection with each other. The founding purpose of the Museum was for the advancement and improvement of all knowledge.

There was a moral as well as an intellectual imperative behind this ambition. Knowledge was important not just for its own sake, but was also something to be shared, thus contributing to the progress, freedom and happiness of all mankind. This had been the driving force of Sir Hans Sloane, on whose great collection the Museum had been built.

In his will he expressed his conviction that 'nothing tends more to raise our ideas of the power, wisdom, goodness providence and other perfections of the Deity than the enlargement of our knowledge in the works of nature.' His will stated that his collection should be offered to the nation for £20,000 – a fraction of its market value.

As a demonstration both of his universalist ideas and his sharp negotiating skills as a businessman, he stipulated that if this offer was not accepted by the State, the collection should be offered on the same terms to the academies of St Petersburg, Paris, Berlin and Madrid, in that order.

He must have known that Parliament would have been extremely unwilling to see his treasures heading off to foreign parts. And indeed, his terms were accepted. The money was raised through a national lottery, corrupt and chaotic as such things often were in those days. And the British Museum was on its way.

The founding Act of Parliament set out a number of principles, all closely aligned to the spirit of the enlightenment – all crucial to the future development of the Museum, and all relevant today, two and a half centuries later.

Firstly, the Museum was to be open free to 'all persons desirous of seeing and viewing the collections, that the same may be rendered as useful as possible, as well towards satisfying the desire of the curious, as for the improvement, knowledge and information of all persons'.

And then the key phrase: the Museum was to 'be preserved and maintained, not only for the inspection of the learned and the curious, but for the general use and benefit of the public'.

'The general use and benefit of the public.' In other words, this was to be for the public good – free to all, not confined to the wealthy or the privileged, and certainly not just intended for British citizens.

Free access has been, and remains, a guiding principle of the Museum from its earliest days. Even in the eighteenth century, visitors were strictly forbidden to offer tips to the staff. Today, visitors have to pay to see special exhibitions, but the whole of the rest of the collection – including those objects that are in storage rather than on public display – is available to the public free of charge.

This was the first museum in the world to be founded by an Act of Parliament, rather than by a royal household or an ancient academy. Across Europe, many royal houses had what were known as curiosity cabinets, and a number of universities had collections, primarily as a teaching aids. But there was nothing on the scale, or offering the public accessibility, of what was being put together in London.

It soon became clear that the Museum would continue to need financial support from the State. A cash crisis in its first couple of years prompted a Government grant, and that support has continued in one form or another ever since. As I will explain later, it remains crucial to this day.

But public funding was never going to be enough to build and conserve what was to be one of the great museums in the world. And the interesting thing is that from the earliest days, gifts of objects and of money came rolling in from benefactors of all kinds.

This was the Museum's first [egyptian] mummy, from the collection of Colonel William Leithieullier, who had visited Egypt in 1721 and returned with a number of wonderful objects. The Trustees went out of their way to thank the Leithieullier family for its generosity, which turned out to be a wise thing to do, as there was another mummy and more treasures to come from the same source.

What lay behind these gifts? Why were – and are – private patrons willing to support a public museum?

There are, I think, a number of explanations. One stems from the fact that, as I have said, the Museum was created by parliament for the public good. It wasn't the private cabinet of a prince: it was to be available free of charge to interested people from around the world. A French visitor observed in 1784: 'If the Biblioteque du Roi, the Cabinet, and our medals and prints were brought together, the result would be quite different from the British Museum. Here, as in everything else, the public spirit of the English is worthy of remark: a considerable portion of the exhibits has been voluntarily given and every day new legacies are recorded.'

Please note that I am not for a second suggesting that the British are by nature more public spirited than their neighbours. But I do believe that an institution that has been created for the public good is more likely to win support from private benefactors than one that has not.

That was perhaps especially true during the age of Enlightenment, when there was a sense of real national pride in such an institution being created in London. Remember that this was a time when London had become the financial and trading capital of the world. When traders were bringing treasure and goods from every corner of the globe through the City, and travellers and explorers were passing through with stories about, and objects from, what to the West were completely unknown lands.

The second and perhaps even more crucial aspect of the British Museum story lies in the governance structure that was established by Parliament from the beginning. The institution was set up as a trust – again, the first of its kind in the world. And the Trustees were given fiduciary responsibility for the preservation and enhancement of the collection, and for its public accessibility.

Even today, it is impossible to overstate the importance of this model when explaining the intellectual and economic workings of the institution. Firstly, it focuses the attention of the governing body on the very long term. New Trustees are told that they are responsible for a trust that was set up more than 260 years ago – and that by far the majority of the beneficiaries of that trust have not yet been born.

In developing his plans for the collection, our wonderful new director, Hartwig Fischer, has to consider the implications not just for his time at Bloomsbury, but

for many decades to come. One of the key attributes of the Museum – and, as I shall explain, one of the motives for its private donors – is trust in the notion that the collection will exist and be taken care of forever, and that it will always be open to scholars and to the public.

A second vital component of the Trustee model is that it permits a healthy degree of autonomy from the State. It is true that a number – though by no means all – of the Trustees are appointed by the Prime Minister of the day. But their fiduciary responsibility is clear – it is to the institution, not the State.

This depoliticises their decision-making. The Trustees have a legal duty to keep the collection together for the public good. And they alone must make important decisions such as when and where to lend objects in the collection.

One result of this is that if – as sometimes happens – pressure comes from a particular community somewhere around the world to return an object in the collection to its place of origin, that is not a decision the politicians can take.

Here's a practical example of what this autonomy can mean. When the Trustees decided to lend one of the Parthenon sculptures to the Hermitage in St Petersburg two years ago – a loan of a kind that had not been made before and that was bound to be controversial – they did not tell the politicians in advance about their plan. The politicians subsequently acknowledged that this approach had made sense. If they had known ahead of time that the loan was going to take place – remember this was a difficult time in the relationships between the UK and Russia – there might have been all kinds of complications: committees to be formed, ambassadors to be consulted, and so forth.

As things turned out, the loan was a complete success – above all with large numbers of Russians, who saw it as very welcome evidence of the fact that despite all the political problems of the time, they remained citizens of the Republic of Letters.

People give things to museums like ours because they know they will be kept and looked after for ever. One donor observed recently: 'It is the easiest way of achieving a kind of immortality, by donating something which becomes part of the great collections of the British Museum.' And as such, the monetary value of the object becomes irrelevant – because it is never going to be sold. Instead, it has become part of a global public good.

Let me give you two very different examples of how this has worked in practice.

The Rothschilds were among the greatest collectors of the nineteenth century, seeking out objects of the finest quality and historic importance. Baron Ferdinand Rothschild was at the forefront of the family in this respect. During the late 1870s, he built an extraordinary French *château*, Waddesdon Manor, in the heart of the English countryside, with a special room that was to include precious and intricate Renaissance and Baroque objects – a treasure house that might be compared to those of a Renaissance prince, or to the courts of Dresden, Munich, Prague or Vienna.

His new Smoking Room at Waddesdon, in the words of the British Museum's Dora Thornton, came to present a snapshot of a particular moment in the self-fashioning of a new European dynasty.

Baron Ferdinand had a public as well as a private purpose to his collecting. 'Collectors may deplore the fact', he wrote, 'but it should be a source of gratification to the public that most fine works of art drift slowly but surely into museums and public galleries. In private hands they can afford delight only to a small number of persons.'

And he very much believed in the value of a public museum on the British model: he was himself a Trustee of the British Museum. He once wrote that 'the establishment of art as an institution' could be precisely dated to 1753 – the foundation year of the British Museum.

Childless, he determined to keep his collection together by giving it to the Museum. And after a complex set of negotiations with the Treasury, the gift went a long way towards allowing his estate to pay off its death duty liabilities, so that Waddesdon Manor was able to remain with the Rothschild family after his death.

In accordance with the terms of his will, the Waddesdon bequest has always been kept together, set apart from the rest of the collection in its own named room. Last year, and with the generous support of the Rothschild Foundation, the collection was re-housed in a grand suite of rooms on the ground floor of the British Museum – a beautifully designed gallery to delight new and future generations of the public with Baron Ferdinand's collection.

Here's a story of a different type of benefactor. Michael Grange, pictured here in the front in white trainers, is not a Rothschild but he shares Baron Ferdinand's passion for his collection of clocks, which is his life's work, and his wish is to keep it together and well looked-after forever. The way to do that, he decided, was to put it into the care of the British Museum.

In 2010, he donated his 165 clocks, movements and dials to the museum. This is a comprehensive group of 30-hour long case clocks, which were the mainstay of provincial English clock making in the eighteenth century. The collection covers diverse parts of the country, across a period of 1690 to1820, and demonstrates the variation of styles and techniques used in their making.

Mr Grange kept the clocks at his house in Cheltenham, where every room had at least one clock in it. In the bathroom, eleven clocks surrounded the centrally placed bathtub. Some 50 movements occupied every available space on the walls of the three-storey staircase.

As you can imagine, he really loves his clocks. I was present when he made the gift, and for me, as perhaps for others who were there, it was a rather emotional moment.

Over the years, the Museum has been blessed by the support of generous scholars and Trustees. People like Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks, sometimes referred to as the second founder of the British Museum, through whose work and generosity the Museum acquired many significant objects in the second half of the nineteenth century, like the Franks Casket, the Oxus Treasure and the Royal Gold Cup. He once wrote that 'collecting is an hereditary disease, and I fear incurable'. One hundred and twenty years later, the public is still benefitting from his ailment.

Among the Trustees, a shy, retiring but wealthy clergyman, the Reverend Clayton Cracherode, stands out for his contributions. According to his obituary in 1799, the greatest journey he ever made was from London to Oxford, and he was never on horseback in his life. He left his entire collection to the Museum, including a stunning set of Rembrandt prints and the most beautiful coins and medals.

Patrons of the arts usually have a passion for their subject, and that passion can be fired by the enthusiasm and knowledge of colleagues working in the Museum. Hamish Parker is a fund manager in the City of London, and a collector of modern and contemporary graphic art. Over the years, he has become friendly with Stephen Coppel in the Prints and Drawings Department, who had long dreamt of having a complete set of Picasso's *Vollard Suite* in the collection.

Hamish Parker made this happen in 2011, with a gift in memory of his father, and followed this up a few years later by funding the purchase of Picasso's *347 Suite*. So it is that this Department, despite its modest acquisition budget, contains the two greatest series of Picasso's etchings from the middle and end of his artistic career.

Here's another, and very different type of story. One Sunday in 2011, Francesco Tuccio, a carpenter, was at Mass in his local church on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa. Among the congregation were bedraggled groups of newly arrived Eritrean migrants, weeping for loved ones who had drowned during the Mediterranean crossing. After the service, Sig. Tuccio went down to the beach and began collecting the blistered driftwood from the wreckage of migrant boats that had washed up on Lampedusa's shores. He fashioned the timber into crosses, and offered one to every migrant he met as a symbol of their rescue and of hope for a new life.

BBC radio reported this moving story last year, and Jill Cook, a senior curator at the Museum, responded immediately. Here, she thought, was a way in which a Museum that does not show photographs could tell the story of the migrants, who by definition have no possessions and therefore would otherwise be invisible. She contacted Sig. Tuccio, who promptly put a cross in a cardboard box and sent it off in the post.

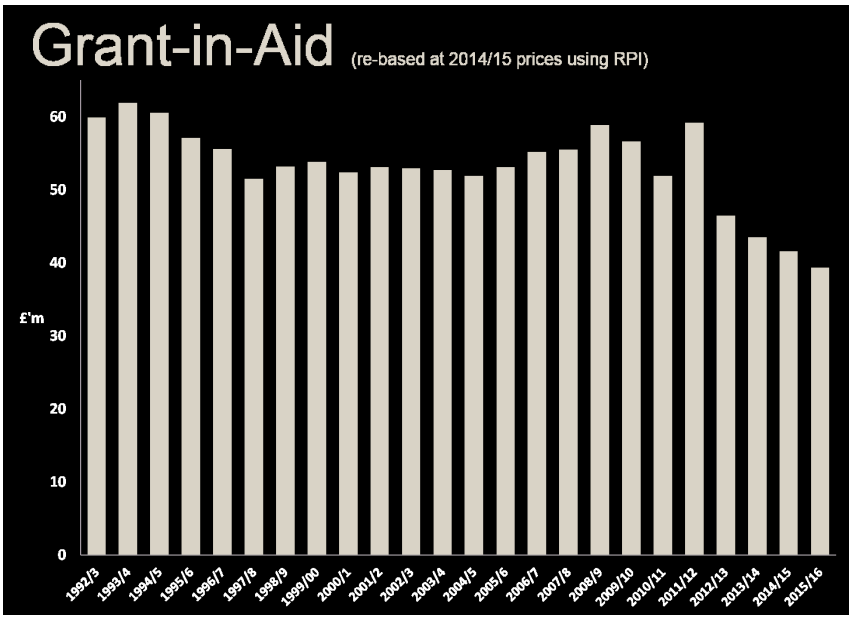
'I was so happy and proud when the museum contacted me,' he said. 'And then I asked myself a question. If this message has reached such an important museum, visited by people from all over the world, is this enough to break down the wall in the hearts of people still indifferent to this terrible crisis?'

His cross went on display in a prominent part of the Museum, and then set off on a tour around public places in Britain, where it has generated a profound public response.

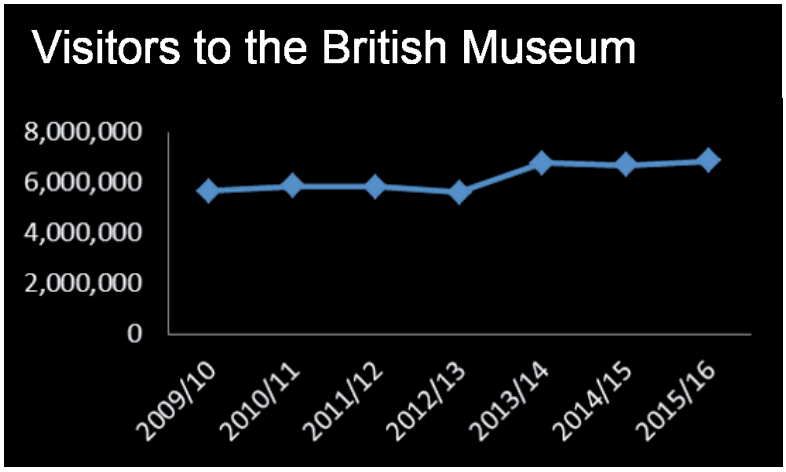
So far, I have only talked about the gifts of objects. But of course, private patronage is also increasingly needed to make great capital projects possible. This was the story of the Great Court Development at the start of the new millennium. Opened in December 2000, it was at the time the biggest single museum project to be concluded in the UK since the war. The National Lottery, which had been launched by the Government in the mid-1990s, provided the cornerstone funding, but a further £52m had to be found from non-Government sources for the project to go ahead. This was achieved with something to spare, with the biggest single donation of £20m coming from the Garfield Weston Foundation. It's fair to say that the Great Court has subsequently become one of the most recognisable spaces in the United Kingdom.

A similar mix of public and global private patronage is also what made possible the World Conservation and Exhibition Centre, a grand combination of conservation laboratories, storage and exhibition space that opened to the public two years ago.

The British Museum Great Court, London



Grand-in-Aid (re-based at 2014/15 prices using RPI)



Visitors to the British Museum entre 2009–16

The Government provided the seed corn for this development – a grant of £25m towards the budget of £135m. A further £10m came from Lottery funds, and the rest was made up of multiple sources: generous donations from philanthropists – notably the Sainsbury family – and foundations, together with transfers from the Museum's own reserves and other gifts from donors around the world with particular interests,– in conservation, for example.

For all this private philanthropy, it is important to understand that Government funding is still essential. There are three main reasons. Firstly, without it, free entry to the Museum would simply not be affordable. The main political parties in the UK are committed to the principle of free access to the national museums and galleries, and the grant is intended in part to underwrite that.

Then there is the fact that investment in essential infrastructure is not always attractive to donors. It is a very exceptional philanthropist who is willing to pay for a new boiler room, for example.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the conservation of our huge collection is very expensive and can never be deferred. If the Opera House ran into financial difficulties, it could decide to put one less new show into its programme. But the Museum cannot decide to stop conserving the ethnographic collection for a year or two. So it needs the certainty of predictable public support.

That now amounts to a little over £40 million a year, a figure that adjusted for inflation has fallen by around a third since the banking crisis and which now represents very roughly half the Museum's total income.

The UK, like the rest of Europe, faces continuing fiscal challenges, so we must expect that Government funding will remain under pressure for the foreseeable future. And yet the Museum's demands for resources are bound to grow.
As I suggested at the outset, the moral responsibilities of the great museums, and the need for public understanding of the kind they exist to support, have never been greater. In the words of the Getty Trust's Jim Cuno, echoing the guiding principles of the Fundación Arte Y Mecenazgo:

> 'This I hold to be the promise of encyclopaedic museums: that as liberal, cosmopolitan institutions, they encourage identification with others in the world, a shared sense of being human, of having in every meaningful way a common history, with a common future not only at *stake* but increasingly, in an age of resurgent nationalism and sectarian violence, at *risk*.'

Poster for *Indigenous Australia. Enduring Civilisation* exhibition (2015)
at the British Museum, supported by BP

Poster for *Egypt: Faith After the Pharaohs* exhibition (2015-2016),
organised by British Museum and Staatliche Museum zu Berlin, supported by BLAVATNIK

The objects in our collection have stories to tell about how humanity in the past has addressed the great challenges of the present: about trade and immigration and the clashes of culture; about faiths and the conflicts between them; about globalisation and about inequality. By way of illustration, let me point you to just a very few of the special exhibitions we have put on in the past few years.

In 2012, the Museum told the story of *The Hajj*, the great annual pilgrimage of devout Muslims to Mecca. This brought tens of thousands of visitors into the Museum who had never been there before, and it opened the eyes of the world to this crucial pillar of the Islamic faith.

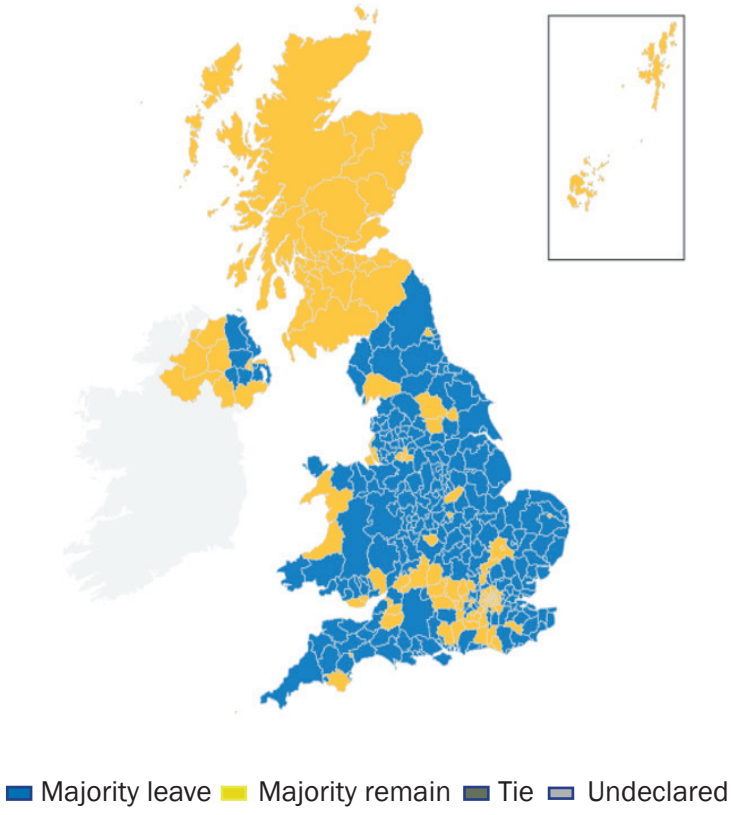
Last year, we presented *Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation*. This told the story of a culture with an unbroken history of 60,000 years, and of the brutal inroads colonists have made into it over the last two hundred years. It showed the world the exquisite works of art that had been, and are still being, produced by a civilisation about which most people in the West knew nothing.

Last year we had *Egypt: Faith After the Pharaohs*, which told the remarkable story of Christians, Jews and Muslims living side by side for the thousand years after Christ.

Then this year, there was *Sicily: Culture and Conquest*. For me, one memorable feature of this exhibition was the picture it painted of a society that in the twelfth century was on its way to becoming a multicultural kingdom, where the rulers were attempting to bring Christians, Jews and Muslims together into a single Sicilian people. Here's a marble inlaid tombstone of the period, carrying eulogies in Judeo-Arabic, Latin, Greek and Arabic.

But special exhibitions like these, and the ideas that they generate, will only access a very small proportion of the public. Although they attract audiences in the hundreds of thousands, they do not have the breadth to meet the Foundation's goals of strengthening society, fostering social cohesion, and driving social transformation and evolution. And that today is a very important challenge.

To take one example, the UK – like Spain – is at present a politically divided country. The Brexit vote in June has revealed tensions between the young – who were mainly in favour of remaining in the European Union – and the old, who tended to favour leaving. Between those with and without higher education. Between the regions and nations of the United Kingdom, with Scotland and Northern Ireland voting along with London to remain, and the rest of the country opting to leave. Between those who believed immigration had been of benefit to



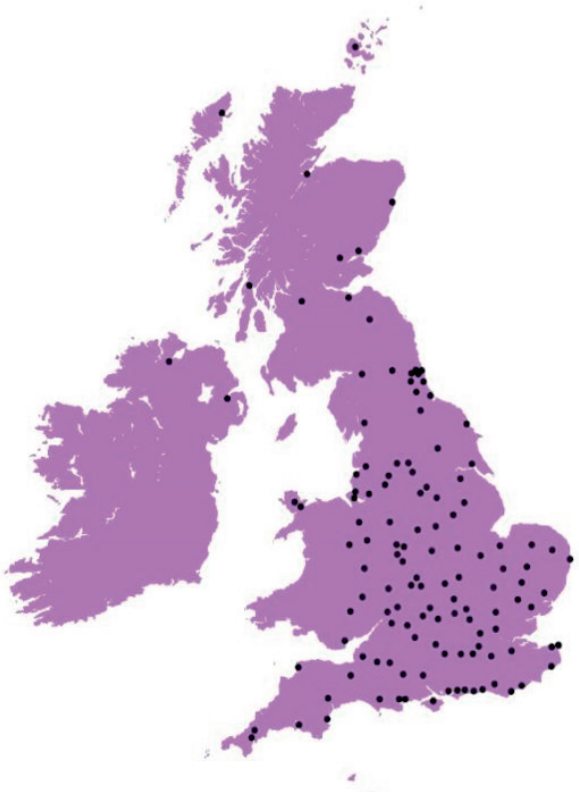
Map showing the division of voting in the Brexit referendum

the country, and those who felt it had not. Between individual families who have fallen out over this very big question about our country's future.

There has never been anything quite like this in my lifetime. Many different people and politicians will have to play a part in healing these divisions. But it is clear that culture, education and the arts have a role in building social cohesion and bringing divided people together. And that is an added responsibility for public museums like ours, and for the patrons who support us. We are the British Museum, not the Museum of London, and so we wish to make our collection available as widely as possible across the country, in all kinds of different ways. And we have to depend on private sponsors to make this possible.

Last year, 7.6 million more British people saw British Museum objects on loan around the United Kingdom than those who visited the Bloomsbury location. This map shows the location of these partnerships in 2015–16.

This activity would not have been possible without the support of private patronage – there is limited state support for this kind of work. A number of private foundations make grants specifically for this purpose of outreach, seeing



British Museum loans in the UK during 2015–16

Map showing the British Museum's international loans, cooperation and activities during 2015–16

it as an exercise that is very much in the public interest. And in the wake of the Brexit vote, we have to do still more to share stories of our common humanity around the United Kingdom.

More than this, we see ourselves as a museum of the whole world, for the whole world. We exist to satisfy the curiosity and thirst for knowledge of people everywhere. Thanks to the long history of British shipping, immigration, trade, empire, missionaries and the like, you have a better chance of telling a worldwide story from the British Museum's collection than from any other. At least since the eighteenth century, Britain has been more connected with the rest of the world than has any other country. We know that most people in the world will never have the chance to visit London. So we seek to support international exhibitions with partners like "La Caixa". We lend objects to museums everywhere, and are seeking support from private patrons now for a major exhibition planned for the end of next year in Mumbai, in conjunction with the CSMVS Museum.

And we have a large training programme for young curators from across the world, which again is entirely financed by private donations.

Broadcasting is another way of reaching very large audiences. Neil MacGregor's *History of the World in One Hundred Objects* (from the British Museum) has now been downloaded from the BBC more than 40 million times around the world, a truly astonishing response to programming of this type.

And we are well on our way to developing a very ambitious programme to make our collection and our stories universally available in online formats. This exercise, too, is supported by private sector partners. For example, Google Arts and Culture will take you on a virtual tour of the Museum in Bloomsbury, and show some of its treasures with greater clarity than can be seen with the naked eye.

Last year, Samsung helped curators to build a virtual Bronze Age village in the Museum. You could put on goggles and wander around virtual pathways and huts, alighting on objects that could be seen in real life in the gallery upstairs.

Can cultural understanding really help to heal divisions and build cohesion in the way that I have suggested? Let me end with a story about this object. It is not much to look at – roughly 9 inches long, made of clay, and as you can see it has taken a few knocks in its time. And yet it is one of the great treasures of the collection, and has an extraordinarily powerful message for the world today. It was buried in the foundations of a wall in Babylon after Cyrus the Great, the Persian Emperor, captured the city in 539 BC. Written in Babylonian cuneiform,

it was a decree from the Emperor that repatriated people who had been brought to Babylon, and restored damaged shrines dedicated to different gods.

It was this decree that allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and rebuild The Temple. As such, it has become a symbol of tolerance and respect for different people and different faiths, and is valued by people all around the world.

In 2010, the Trustees of the British Museum received a request to loan the Cyrus Cylinder to the National Museum in Tehran. It was a difficult decision. It came at a time when relations between the UK and Iran had been stretched almost to breaking point, and not long after the repressive aftermath of disputed elections. The easiest thing would have been to say 'no'. But there were strong cultural links between scholars in the two museums, and a sense of obligation in London. In the previous years, the National Museum had made spectacular loans to London to support successful exhibitions on the Forgotten Empire and Shah Abbas, and there was a strong argument to be made for reciprocation. The curators were confident that the terms of the loan would be met.

After much sometimes agonised debate, the Trustees decided to approve the loan. So off the Cyrus Cylinder went, to be greeted at an extraordinary opening ceremony by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who described Cyrus as 'King of the World' – a striking phrase given that Iran's pre-Islamic past was not normally something to be celebrated by the country's leadership.

The Cylinder was seen and appreciated by nearly one million Iranians. And it returned safely to Bloomsbury, where it now sits comfortably in its case.

Reflecting on the loan, our Museum Director said that the Cylinder was 'a link to a past which we all share and to a key moment in history that has shaped the world around us. Objects are uniquely able to speak across time and space, and this object must be shared as widely as possible.'

This, I think, goes to the heart of what we are discussing this evening. It is what "la Caixa" Foundation demonstrates in its exhibition programmes.

And it is what the British Museum is all about.

It is both for the public good and a noble mission, and one that merits the support both of the state and of private patrons.

Thank you.

The British Museum, London

Questions

Q: How does the Museum select the donations it receives? Throughout its history, many collectors or patrons will have tried—or have wanted—to get their works or collections into the British Museum. How does the Museum decide what is included and what is not?

RL: Provenance is vitally important. It is absolutely essential to be clear where the object came from and how it arrived at the Museum, who has owned it in the past and where. Because we live in world where objects can be traded, which are illegally or immorally traded, so we need to be very certain that we know where the object comes from. Then the curator makes the decision that the object fits a need that the Collection experiences. The example of the clocks… I don't think we had any clocks like that and now we have loads of them. If somebody comes in with another 50, we might say: 'Thank you very much, but you might try the Victoria & Albert Museum.' With gifts, and even more so with gifts of money, reputation matters. It is possible to imagine that gifts from some sources might even jeopardise the reputation of the Museum, if the donor were using money generated in activities most people would be unhappy about. Obviously, it is controversial. We have very generous sponsorship from BP [British Petroleum] and oil companies are under attack from groups around the UK, from people who believe that oil companies are destroying the environment. And so they protest against that type of sponsorship. As Trustees we take the view that it is not a sound argument and we are grateful to our friends for supporting us. Actually, last week there were protests at the Science Museum, which has got a new exhibition that has been sponsored by Statoil, Norway. My feeling on that particular theme is that we are a public place and if people want to protest they can, so long as don't damage the objects.

Q: Does the British Museum, like the Louvre or the Centre Pompidou, intend to take part of its collection permanently outside the United Kingdom and set up a base in another country?

RL: The easy answer is no! We have just appointed a new director. I think it would be surprising to imagine the Louvre appointing a Brit to be a director of their wonderful museum. And that speaks for the autonomy of our collection. We have a relationship with Abu Dhabi. In Abu Dhabi the Louvre has just completed a spectacular new exhibition space – called the Louvre. The Guggenheim is intending to do the same. But we don't want to have an outpost with 'British Museum' on the front door. We don't think that's our purpose. But we are supporting the Sheikh Zayed National Museum and we will give them loans – some short, some

longer-term. We don't think it is our job to set up museums around the world but to help museums that already exist. Every now and then the government suggests setting up a British Museum in Scotland. Our reply is that there are a number of really good museums in Scotland and we will give long-term loans to them, but we don't want to set up in competition.

Q: How many of the private donations to the Museum are spontaneous or have been previously "worked on" by the curators?

RL: As you would expect, we have a development team whose job is to be alert to potential donors, especially money. The example I quoted of Hamish Parker and the *Vollard Suite* was spontaneous. The curator had said that his dream was to have this thing and this friend and generous sponsor made it possible. I can't think of a case where somebody said we really like old so-and-so's wonderful object, although we have said we'd really like old so-and-so's money! By way of an anecdote, in a past life I was a journalist working in New York and I remember thinking how interesting it would be to know what you had to do to be a trustee of one of the museums there. So I phoned them all up and they quoted a price. But the Met didn't, they said we don't set a figure – we want their stuff!

Q: What is the situation of the Greek government's claim to the Parthenon marbles?

It's not hot, if that's the right word, but it's not happy. It's hard to see how that can be resolved. The Greek government, and the Greek people, passionately believe that they belong in Athens. And we take a view that those that are in our collection are best presented there. It is not a legal matter, because if it were someone would have acted on it by now. It is more a moral question. The argument we make is along these lines. As you know, roughly forty percent of the marbles are lost. The rest are pretty much evenly divided between Athens and our Museum. In Athens you see them perfectly and beautifully in an Athenian context – in London you see them for free in a broader European or even global context. They've been there for two hundred years. They've hugely influenced Western art of all kinds. When you look at them there, you can see what came before in terms of human culture. We put on a wonderful exhibition last year called *Defining Beauty*, which was about the Greek idea of beauty, and it had in it a couple of Parthenon sculptures together with sculptures that came before, and well before, and after, and well after. By looking at those together you could see how intellectual ideas had moved, fed on each other and created new ideas. That is our argument for keeping these objects in London, which the Greeks don't accept. I think I am right in saying that they can't ask for a loan of the objects because that would

imply that they think we owned them, which they don't accept. To be frank, one of the considerations we had when lending the Parthenon sculpture to Russia was that the Hermitage has been a sister museum, a creature of the Enlightenment, for a very long time. It was their special anniversary. They wanted to borrow this object and we said to ourselves that if we won't lend to them, what does that tell us about what we think about our relationship with that object? We lend everything else. If it is safe, if it is going to be well conserved, if it is fit to travel, why wouldn't we lend it if we were confident about our ownership of it? And that was a consideration that was taken into account when we decided to lend it. But it is not something that you can easily find an answer to.

Q: As an expert in education, how do you think young people should be educated to create a society that is more sensitized and more committed to art, for there to be more patrons and collectors? In what way can education influence this?

RL: I don't know! And I won't bluff. In the UK there's a degree of correlation between the relative deprivation of the household and the child's likelihood of having a good chance in life, and that correlation is closer in the UK than in most rich countries. We have a pyramidically shaped school system. At the top are some of the best primary and secondary schools in the world, then below we have a lot of schools that really don't perform well at all. For the children who are there, it is not a question of understanding and enjoying art. It is a question of whether they can read or write! And we know this problem can be faced. One of the exciting developments in the UK, for various reasons, is that the secondary school system in London has improved dramatically over the last ten to fifteen years. Ten or fifteen years ago middleclass parents would bankrupt themselves to get their kids into a private school. Now you don't have to that in London. The question now in places like Blackpool, Burnley and Middlesbrough, and other places in the north of England, is to do with teaching, it is to do with parenting, obviously, but there are ways of… well, if you can do it in London you can do it anywhere. I completely understand the point of your question, but it is not really what we are anxious about at the Museum.

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Sir Richard Lambert joined the *Financial Times* after reading History at Balliol College Oxford. Among other jobs, he edited the Lex column and served as New York Bureau Chief and Deputy Editor. He edited the newspaper from 1991 to 2001.

After leaving the *FT*, he was an independent member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee between 2003 and 2006, and Director General of the Confederation of British Industry from 2006 to 2011.

He is Chancellor of the University of Warwick and an independent member of the Foreign and Commonwealth Supervisory Board. He was a Trustee of the British Museum from 2003 to 2011, and was appointed Chairman in 2014.

In 2011 he received a knighthood for services to business.

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