



Etruscan painting of two men  
As copied in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century drawing of the 5th-century BC 'Tomb of the Chariots' in a cemetery at Tarquina, Italy  
© Trustees of the British Museum

## TWO EXHIBITIONS EXPLORING LGBTQ+ HISTORIES

'...a great unrecorded history.' E.M. Forster

**This autumn the Ashmolean presents two free exhibitions celebrating LGBTQ+ histories using objects from different periods around the world; and in the image of one of the earliest 'gay icons'.**

**NO OFFENCE: EXPLORING LGBTQ+ HISTORIES**  
25 September–2 December 2018

**NO OFFENCE** is a British Museum partnership touring exhibition commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act (1967) which partially decriminalised homosexuality in England and Wales. First shown in 2017, and developed in consultation with community partners, the exhibition is inspired by *A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity Across the World* written by Oxford's Professor of Egyptology, Richard Bruce Parkinson.

The exhibition explores the often overlooked and under-represented stories that are to be found in museum collections and art and artefacts from across the globe. It includes the Ain Sakhri Lovers, the world's earliest known representation of two people having sex. Discovered near Bethlehem, the tiny calcite sculpture dates to c. 9000 BC and shows two figures with their legs and arms wrapped around each other. They have no faces or identifiable attributes and there is no written account of the sculpture so there is no way of knowing their gender. Why would we assume they are man and woman?

Another highlight, exclusive to the Ashmolean, is a copy of the shooting script of the groundbreaking 1987 Merchant Ivory film, *Maurice*, lent by director James Ivory. The film is now recognised as one of the greatest LGBTQ+ romantic films of all time and has been recently restored and re-released. Oscar-winner James Ivory will be Visiting Professor at TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities) during November 2018 where a programme of events will include a post-film Q&A with the director at the Curzon Oxford Cinema, after a showing of *Autobiography of a Princess* (1975) on 6 November; and an 'In-conversation with James Ivory' at the Sheldonian Theatre on 7 November.

Other objects in the exhibition range from Ancient Greek erotic pots to modern campaign signs and badges, showing how same-sex desire, love and gender-diversity have been depicted throughout history and across cultures. Some objects relate to named individuals famously associated with LGBTQ+ culture – the poet Sappho, St Sebastian, the Ladies of Llangollen; others are anonymous and offer a glimpse into the rich 'unrecorded history' remarked upon by E.M. Forster.

**Matthew Winterbottom, Exhibition Curator, Ashmolean Museum says:** 'Like all museums around the world, the Ashmolean's collections contain many objects with hidden and often neglected LGBTQ+ histories. We hope that this exhibition, together with the accompanying trails and events, will help these stories to be uncovered and celebrated.'



Bust of Antinous with Greek inscription  
Discovered in Balanea, Syria in 1879  
AD 130–138  
Private Collection

**Dr. Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum says:** 'The British Museum's collection offers unique - but partial - insights into LGBTQ histories of desire, love and identity. The selection of objects drawn together for this touring exhibition reminds us that same-sex love and desire and gender diversity have always been an integral part of human experience. The exhibition is part of the British Museum's collaborative work with partners across the UK to reach new audiences and broaden access to the many stories within its collection.'

Following the Ashmolean, the exhibition will travel to the National Justice Museum, Nottingham; Bolton Museum; and Norwich Millennium Library from December 2018–August 2019.

### **ANTINOUS: BOY MADE GOD** 25 September 2018–24 February 2019

**ANTINOUS** was a boy-favourite of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (AD 117–138). Born in the Roman province of Bythnia (in modern-day Turkey), he was part of the imperial entourage on a tour in the Greek East, when he drowned in the Nile in AD 130. This tragedy, and Hadrian's grief, reverberated across the empire: Antinous was commemorated in busts and statues and on coins; a new city in Middle Egypt, Antinoopolis, was founded in his memory; and he was venerated as a hero and a god.

This exhibition centres around one of the most important surviving portraits of Antinous - an inscribed bust dated AD 130–138 which was discovered in Syria in 1879. On loan from a private collection, the bust was recently conserved by the Ashmolean and a magnificent new plaster cast was made for display in the Museum. The exhibition will show casts of other key portraits, as well as coins of Antinous, medals and bronze figurines made between the second and eighteenth centuries.

The exhibition explores the archaeology of Antinous's cult and how his unforgettable portrait image was disseminated across the empire, turning a country-boy into a hero and god with a legacy extending from antiquity into the modern world.

**Bert Smith, Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology at Oxford and exhibition curator, says:** 'Hadrian and Antinous are considered the most famous same-sex relationship in antiquity. The later written-record is marked by a moralising, often condemnatory tone; but Antinous's image, recorded in artworks, coins and monuments, offers a different perspective. These remarkable objects tell the story of a boy-made-god who had a cultural and religious significance that extended across the Roman Empire.'

