

STATUEPHILIA:

Contemporary Sculptors at the British Museum

4 October 2008 - 25 January 2009

Across the Museum

Admission free

The British Museum houses one of the greatest sculpture collections in the world. This autumn, it will showcase a group of major works by leading contemporary British artists in a series of installations paying tribute to the cultural significance of sculpture across the ages.

Works by **Damien Hirst**, **Antony Gormley**, **Ron Mueck**, **Marc Quinn** and **Noble and Webster** will highlight the perennial potency of sculpture and remind visitors to the Museum of the extraordinary unbroken history of this art form and its unique relationship to human history. *Statuephilia* complements a major new television series on the history of sculpture, *The Sculpture Diaries*, produced by ZCZ films and to be broadcast on Channel 4 in the autumn. *Statuephilia* has been selected by Sunday Times art critic and presenter of the *Sculpture Diaries* Waldemar Januszczak in association with the British Museum.

Each work will be sited in a different gallery within the Museum, located so as to create an arresting juxtaposition with the stunning works that make up the Museum's permanent collection. For over 250 years, the collection has been an inspiration for contemporary artists, providing a rare opportunity to view sculpture from as far a field as Mexico, Easter Island, Nigeria, Greece, North America, Polynesia, China and India. Henry Moore famously declared 'nine-tenths of my understanding and learning about sculpture came from the British Museum'. By providing a new context for outstanding examples of contemporary sculpture the project will facilitate visual dialogue with traditions from different eras and encourage the public to engage with them in novel ways.

- **Damien Hirst** will commandeer the historic wall cases of the Enlightenment Gallery and fill them with 200 specially created skulls. The resulting work, *Cornucopia*, will address Hirst's perennial fascination with death, while also commenting on the very legitimacy of collection and display. These objects are the first of their kind for Hirst, and will premiere at the British Museum.
- **Antony Gormley's** *Case for an Angel I* - a precursor to his most celebrated public sculpture, *Angel of the North* - will fill the entire Front Hall of the Museum. Raised high on a plinth, and boasting a 9-metre wingspan, it is itself monumental, and will provide clear links with the Egyptian, Assyrian and Classical statuary that the Museum holds in abundance, and inspired Gormley to become a sculptor in the first place. Antony Gormley is a Trustee of the British Museum.
- **Ron Mueck** will show *Mask II*, his widely exhibited sleeping Self-Portrait, in the heart of the 'Living and Dying:

Wellcome Trust Gallery' with the Museum's monumental Maoi . The giant head, lying on its side, brings to mind Easter Island's mysterious history, only recently solved after two centuries of speculation.

- **Marc Quinn's** solid gold statue, *Siren*, of supermodel Kate Moss - icon of contemporary beauty and Aphrodite of our times - will find fitting setting at the centre of the Nereid Gallery, interacting with the great Greek beauties that surround it. Quinn's work is the largest gold statue since Ancient Egypt and will premiere at the Museum.
- **Noble and Webster** have sculpted an entirely new phantasmagoric silhouette work inspired by the surroundings of the Museum's world-renowned Egyptian Sculpture Gallery. "The work is assembled from our collection of naturally mummified animal parts, tiny little creatures teased and tortured by our feral farmyard cat, that when assembled will cast a shadow of our profiles onto the walls of the ancient Egyptian galleries" .

Philip Attwood, coordinator of Modern Collections at the British Museum, said:

"Perhaps because the British Museum is often celebrated as a museum of antiquities, it is not always realised that its collections also include a broad range of contemporary works from around the world. Ever since its foundation in 1753, the Museum has acquired modern material alongside objects from ancient times, and this exhibition is a demonstration of the power of this duality."

Waldemar Januszczak, Sunday Times art critic, presenter of *The Sculpture Diaries* and co-curator of *Statuephilia*, said:

"The series and this project are united in their ambition. In both cases, across both media, the desire is to highlight sculpture's unceasing potency. Statuephilia will bring together a group of modern sculptors, all of whom have prowled through the corridors and display cabinets of the British Museum in their formative years looking at sculpture and feeling its unmatched international potency. The British Museum helped to make these artists what they are. Now they are seeking to return the favour."

Participating artist **Antony Gormley** said:

"The British Museum is a laboratory of possibility for any creative mind. It is filled with objects that reach across time and touch us intimately. Seeing as a child the great head of Rameses and the Assyrian winged bulls at the BM was what made me become a sculptor."

Jan Younghusband, Commissioning Editor Arts and Performance, Channel 4 said:

"We are delighted to sponsor this unique exhibition to mark the broadcast of the Sculpture Diaries Series. Our ongoing partnership with the British Museum is a great inspiration to our work."

The Museum's Prints and Drawings collection includes various works by some of the same artists taking part in *Statuephilia*, notably a selection of drawings and a series of prints by Antony Gormley and a study for a sculpture by Marc Quinn. These works, together with a selection of about 80 drawings from the Museum's Prints and Drawings collection, will go on display from 25th September 2008 to 25th January 2009 in an exhibition entitled *British Sculptors' Drawings: Moore to Gormley*.

A public programme featuring late openings, debates, lunchtime lectures, gallery talks and screenings of Channel 4's *Sculpture Diaries* series will complement the show throughout its duration. For more information please visit www.britishmuseum.org

For more information and images please contact:

Maria Marques britishmuseum@brunswickgroup.com

Hannah Boulton communications@britishmuseum.org

For information on The Sculpture Diaries television series please contact:
Matthew Robinson mr.pr@virgin.net

Supported by: Linklaters, The Henry Moore Foundation, Channel 4

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- **Waldemar Januszczak** and **James Fox** are guest curators of *Statuephilia*.
- **The Sculpture Diaries** is a major 3-part series by **ZCZ Films** for Channel 4 to be aired from 31st August 2008 at 9pm. In three epic journeys, presenter Waldemar Januszczak travels to some of the most spectacular artistic locations in the world - from Peru to Nigeria and from Easter Island to Japan - determined to prove that sculpture is the most important of all the arts. He uses the form to explore attitudes to sex, power and the cosmos and to demonstrate why sculpture has been, and will continue to be, at the heart of our cultural lives. The series visits some of the most revered contemporary sculptors, including Antony Gormley, Marc Quinn, James Turrell and the Chapman Brothers.
- **ZCZ Films** is one of the UK's leading producers of arts television. Founded in 1997, the company specialises in the production of prestigious documentaries on art, culture and travel and has made films for all the major British and American broadcasters. Besides its definitive biographies of Picasso, Gauguin, van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec, ZCZ's most recent projects include a high-definition profile of Japan for Discovery's landmark ATLAS series, and an upcoming three-part documentary on the Baroque for the BBC. For more information, see www.zczfilms.com.
- **British Sculptors' Drawings: Moore to Gormley** will run from 25 September 2008 to 25 January 2009. To coincide with the Year of Sculpture 2008 and the *Statuephilia* project, the Department of Prints and Drawings will be displaying a selection of about 80 drawings from its own collection, by British sculptors of the twentieth century.
- **Linklaters LLP** is a law firm which specialises in advising the world's leading companies, financial institutions and governments on their most important and challenging transactions and assignments. With offices in major business and financial centres, Linklaters delivers an outstanding service to clients throughout the world.
- **The Henry Moore Foundation** is a registered charity, set up and generously endowed by Mr Moore in 1977 'to advance the education of the public by the promotion of their appreciation of the fine arts and in particular the works of Henry Moore'. Its operation is threefold. From **Perry Green** in Hertfordshire, which comprises Moore's house, Hoglands, his studio, an exhibition space and some seventy acres of grounds where works are displayed, the Foundation cares for and promotes the understanding of work by Henry Moore. At the **Henry Moore Institute** in Leeds, the Foundation oversees

a wider programme of exhibitions, collections and research at its centre for the study of sculpture. The **Grants Programme** sees the Foundation's influence operating at an international level, supporting a wide range of projects encompassing all aspects of the arts in which Henry Moore himself was engaged: sculpture, drawing and print-making (all freely interpreted in the case of contemporary work). Since its inception in 1977 the Foundation has granted over £25 million to a wide variety of arts organisations.