LSE Spectrum Literary Festival lecture

A Little Gay History

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Professor of Egyptology, University of Oxford  Chair, LSE

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSElitfest
A LITTLE GAY HISTORY
Antinous as Osiris

Antinous was the lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (reigned AD 117–138). In AD 130 Hadrian and his imperial entourage were touring Egypt when Antinous drowned in mysterious circumstances. This tragic event happened on the same day the locals were commemorating the death, by drowning in the Nile, of the Egyptian god Osiris.

Antinous is shown here as Osiris, suggesting that he too was reborn as a god from the waters of the Nile. The stance, headdress and loincloth resemble Egyptian statues, but have been slightly altered in a classical, naturalistic and subtly eroticised style. The statue was discovered in 1738–39 near what we now know as a spectacular memorial to Antinous at Hadrian’s Villa.

Vatican Museums, Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Egizio. 22795

Hadrian: Empire and Conflict

Other statues of Antinous and fragments from his memorial are on display in the current special exhibition in the Reading Room.
INTRODUCTION

This guide is concerned with gender roles, norms, and values within Western art from the Renaissance to the present day, and the tour it presents is strongly inspired by contemporary critical gender studies. Since the 1970s, one of the hot topics of discussion among those interested in art has been the question of why there were no great female artists in art history when female artists did in fact exist? Art history tries to make amends for past marginalisation by supplementing art collections with more works by women and works that do not take heterosexual norms as a given. The issue of the significance of gender in relation to art and its spectators is not solely the province of modern art; it can be traced as far back in history as one wishes.
Mwah... is this the first recorded gay kiss?

Egyptian manicurists become homosexual icons
Ancient Egypt To Japan - An LGBT Trail Round The British Museum

By Kate Smith 23 February 2007
Tags: Objects | woodcarving | stone carving | government | All tags

A graphic funerary papyrus from ancient Egypt - just one of the intriguing items in the British Museum collection that features in this LGBT History Month trail. Courtesy the British Museum

In celebration of LGBT History Month, we've walked through the galleries of the British Museum looking for objects and stories that trace the history of the gay experience.

Taking the long view reminds us that although there's been same-sex desire in every culture, it's been 'packaged' in very different ways - as has heterosexual sex. As we'll see, the attitudes of some ancient cultures are almost a mirror image of received truths today.

The end effect is to leave us pleasingly at sea - to realise that the markers for 'lesbian' and 'gay' that have served the community very well in achieving their goals today are not those that would find favour in ancient Greece or Rome.
Explore / Same-sex desire and gender

Same-sex desire and gender identity

The evidence for same-sex desire has often been overlooked in the past, but museums and their collections can allow us to look back and see the diversity of human desire and gender throughout history.

- Same-sex desire
  Evidence for sexual love between members of the same sex through time
- Gender identity
  Fluid ideas of gender from the ancient to the modern world
- Changing attitudes
  From persecution to the struggle for equality

"Homosexuality" as a way to describe a single category of behaviour is a modern European term, but same-sex desire is not a modern western invention (as has sometimes been claimed).

The British Museum has a large number of objects that provide evidence that desire between members of the same sex and fluid ideas of gender have always been aspects of human existence and experience, although they are culturally constructed in a variety of ways.
stela

Object types
stela (all objects)

Materials
granodiorite (all objects)

Techniques
relief (all objects)
incised (scope note | all objects)

Place (findspot)
Found/Acquired: Egypt (scope note | all objects)

Period/Culture
18th Dynasty (scope note | all objects)

Authority
Ruler: Amenhotep III (biographical details | all objects)

Description
Granodiorite stela of Hor and Suty: a round-topped stela, carved within the rectangular framework of the door. The inscriptions throughout are incised and the figures carved in sunk relief. On the lintel of the door are three horizontal lines of text reading from the centre outwards: On the right side, there are three vertical lines of text. At the base of the right panel above a figure of Hor, seated at a table of offerings (almost entirely obliterated), are four (?) vertical lines of text. On the left side are three vertical lines of text. At the base of the left panel above a figure of Suty, seated at a table of offerings (almost entirely obliterated), are four vertical lines of text. On the right and left of the top of the arch of the stela itself, in the angle formed by the frame of the door is a vulture-eye. In the arch of the stela is a winged disc. The stela comprises two registers. The first register is divided into two symmetrical scenes: On the right Anubis, shown with jackal's head, wearing a short skirt and holding a scribe in the left hand and 'ankh'. In the right, is adored by Hor and a woman (both almost entirely obliterated). Above Anubis, there are two vertical columns of text. Above Hor and the woman, are four vertical columns of text. On the left Osiris, shown in mummy form, wearing a crown, beard, necklace and counterpoise, and holding a scribe in his hands, is adored by Suty and a woman (both obliterated). Above Osiris are two vertical columns of text. Above Suty and the woman, are four vertical columns of text. The second register carries an inscription in twenty-one horizontal lines. The stela is well preserved, but there are minor abrasions. The name of Suty in the left hand panel of the door and all the figures with their accompanying inscriptions, apart from those of the gods, were erased in antiquity.
Explore / Themes

Leaders and rulers
Discover the lives and legacies of some of history's most renowned leaders and rulers

Writing
The British Museum collection includes thousands of objects with writing on them: a library of humanity's memories

Money
Money has been used in different forms all over the world for over 5,000 years. The British Museum has one of the largest collections of money in the world.

Animals
Explore the complex relationship between humans and animals as it is reflected in the British Museum collection

Same-sex desire and gender identity
The collection allows us to look at the diversity of human desire and gender throughout history

Time
What is time? How do we measure it? What does it mean to us? Explore the different ways we perceive time through objects in the British Museum collection

Highlights
Browse or search over 4,000 highlights from the Museum collection

Search:
JEWS AND THE GREAT EXHIBITION

On the evening of the opening of the Great Exhibition, the 1st of May 1851, a vote was held in the House of Commons on whether to allow Jews to take a seat in Parliament...

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COMMUNITIES
Browse by community:

LGBT  ASIAN  JEWISH  AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN  POLISH AND EASTERN EUROPEAN  CHINESE

UPCOMING EVENTS
It's easy for us too, to ignore our own bias, and completely misread the past. In ancient Egyptian temple sculptures and reliefs it is not unusual to see images of a pharaoh embracing a god who has a huge erection. What looks to us like an unambiguous homoerotic image is nothing of the kind - the pharaoh is merely claiming in the power of the god.

The past teaches us not to regard the contemporary way of cutting the sexual cake as fixed. Many traditional cultures have posited the idea of 'two-spirited people' or a 'third sex' (typically male), but Plains Indian culture supposed a whole gender continuum between male and female with many variations in between.

Whether a particular kind of love is considered problematically 'deviant' often depends on geography, time, social norms and class. Emperors have often been free to pursue a wider range of sexual tastes, and in the Classical galleries of the British Museum there are plenty, from Julius Caesar to Tiberius who were known to have tried pretty much everything.

This broad experience has not just been for the elite. In many of the AD cultures in this trail - from Maoris to Native Americans - we see a pragmatic acceptance of ordinary people who did not belong to the sexual mainstream. This latitude was frequently suppressed by Western missionaries - and some of the evidence of that forgotten acceptance has been brought to the British Museum. The long-term effects are still playing out: despite courageous gay rights movements, homosexuality remains illegal in most of Africa. By contrast, some younger Native Americans are reclaiming their older ideas about gender and sex as a way of reviving a pre-colonial heritage.

The conversation about what sexuality is, and how it can be expressed, is ongoing. It's not just same-sex activities that are redefined over time. The approved behaviours of heterosexual women in the West changed enormously in the 20th century, with a corresponding relaxation of the idea of the straight man as a stern, providing paterfamilias. It also became possible for the first time, legally and medically, for someone to change their sex. In 2010 academic research explored the kissing games practised by straight male students in Bath; performers from La Roux to Alan Cumming rejected the current proliferating tray of options offered by LGBTQI and described themselves as 'pansexual'. Although the now traditional announcement of 'mum, dad, I'm gay' still stands, it's clear that we're still nowhere near a completely nuanced picture of all the different sexual ways of being.

Only about half of what we've uncovered at the British Museum is currently on display - but that's to do with lack of display space and the conservation needs of fragile objects, rather than an impulse for censorship.

You can find a version of this trail - and see all the undisplayed objects in detail - under Themes in the Explore section at www.britishmuseum.org. Visit 'untold queer London' on Facebook or email untold.london@gmail.com to discuss viewing undisplayed objects and to tell us what you thought.
Last year A History of the World in 100 Objects was BBC Radio’s second most popular programme. Nearly two million people downloaded it every month. Only a couple of the objects were LGBT related. But that doesn’t mean that the British Museum, which co-produced the radio series, is short of gay relics. To tie in with this year’s LGBT History Month, David McGillivray presents his selection of just 10 of the most fascinating...

Go to the British Museum’s website (full details at the end of the opposite page) and you can follow a trail of some of the objects in the Museum’s collection that have important gay significance. “We were anxious to show the range of desires and genders across all cultures,” says Egyptologist Richard Parkinson, who helped curate the LGBT trail. “Same-sex desire is not just a European or a modern phenomenon.” Consequently the gay trail encircles the globe and covers nearly 4,000 years. It’s one of only six themed trails on the British Museum site. (The others are Leaders and Rulers, Money, Writing, Animals and Time). “It’s a sign of how fully the Museum is committed to LGBT issues,” adds Parkinson.

- Indicates objects on permanent display at the British Museum, Great Russell Street, WC1, open daily from 10am-5.30pm (later on Fridays). Anyone can make a free application to see objects not on display.
- To see and read about all the objects on the LGBT trail, go to www.britishmuseum.org. Click “Explore” then “Themes” then “Same Sex Desire and Gender Identity.”
- If you’d like to be sent a free map of the LGBT trail, go to Facebook, search for Write Queer London, and join the group.
- Also check the Museum’s website regularly for more updates.
When I am with him, smoking or talking quietly ahead, or whatever it may be, I see, beyond my own happiness and intimacy, occasional glimpses of the happiness of 1000s of others whose names I shall never hear, and know that there is a great unrecorded history.

considered to be ‘unspeakable’ started to request the right not to be persecuted. After generations of protests and campaigns, attitudes have now changed in many places. In 2011 the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, stated simply that ‘gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights’. This change has, however, not always been smooth or easy. Periods of economic hardship or of disease have often made people look
Introduction: A ‘great unrecorded history’

Glimpses of a History

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Epilogue: (Re-)writing histories
EROTIC VOYEURISM

Traditional Japanese theatre has a convention of transforming sexual identities in performance, as with Shakespeare’s theatre. In the seventeenth century, women were banned from appearing on the Kabuki stage, and men performed female roles. Near a city’s Kabuki theatres, there were teahouses where actors could meet their patrons, and young actors of female roles would sometimes provide sexual services to paying clients. These male-male relationships were often structured by age, as with the samurai, who made up a significant part of the clientele for this not entirely legal demi-monde.

This colour woodblock print from 1770 is one of a series of prints, Elegant Amorous Mane’emon, by the artist Suzuki Harunobu (died 1770). They illustrate the adventures of Ukiyonosuke, who is transformed into the tiny Mane’emon (‘Bean-man’) and who then uses his size to spy on various people making love: his role as a voyeur mirrors that of the viewer of the erotic work of art. Here Mane’emon flies on a kite up to the window of a teahouse to observe a young trainee Kabuki actor in bed with a client. The attractive young actor strokes himself as his client makes love to him. Mane’emon comments,

Good heavens, the method of having male sex involves some elaborate handiwork.

Such commercial erotic prints were produced from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, and could include women making love together: in one album by Chôkôsi Eishô from around 1793–1800 most of the twelve prints show men with women, but one shows two women together, preparing to use a sex toy.
Seemes seeing, but effectually is oue:
For it no forme deliveres to the heart
Of bird, of flower, or shape which it doth lack,
Of his quick object hath the minde no part,
Nor his owne vision houlds what it doth catch:
For if it see the rudift or gentles fight,
The most sweet-savor or deformed creature,
The mountaine, or the sea, the day, or night:
The Croe, or Dowe, it shapes them to your feature.
Incappable of more replaat, with you,
My most true minde thus maketh mine vntrue.

Or whether doth my minde being crown'd with you
Drink up the monk's plague this flattery?
Or whether shall I say mine eie faith true,
And that your loue taught it this Alcumis?
To make of monsters, and things indiget,
Such cherubines as your sweet selfe resemble,
Creating euer bad a perfect beet
As fast as obiects to his beames assemble:
Oh tis the first, tis flattery in my seeing,
And my great minde most kingly drinks it vp,
Mine eie well knowes what with his guilt is greeing,
And to his pallaat doth prepare the cup.
If it be poifon'd, tis the lesser finne,
That mine eye loues it and doth first beginne.

Hype lines that I before haue wrote doe lie,
Euen those that said I could not loue you deere,
Yet then my judgement knew no reason why,
My most ful flame should afterwards burne deereer.
But reckoning time, whose milliond accidents
Crepe in twixt vowes, and change decrees of Kings,
Tan faceted beaute, blure the sharpest intents,
Dueret strong mindes to the course of altring things:
Alas why fearing of times tiranie,

Might
THE FAMILY TREE STOPS HERE DARLING
Report
of the Committee on
Homosexual Offences
and
Prostitution

Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Departments and the Secretary of State for Scotland
by Command of Her Majesty
September 1957

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
FIVE SHILLINGS NET

Cmd. 247
DESIRE IN THE MUSEUM

For many university-educated people in nineteenth-century Europe, ancient Greece offered images of a world where same-sex desire (‘Greek love’) was not incompatible with cultural ideals, and where same-sex desire was not ‘abnormal’. Classical statuary let people view the naked human form in a respectable way, allowing men to gaze at men, which was otherwise unacceptable. As in ancient Athens, these statues had an erotic charge: one male visitor to a museum at this period recorded that ‘I revelled in the sight of pictures and statues of male form and could not keep from kissing [them]’. This photograph shows a statue of an athlete in the galleries of the British Museum; it was taken in 1857 by Roger Fenton (1819–69).

Mediterranean and Indian cultures offered a sense of freedom from English respectability for the English novelist E. M. Forster (1879–1970). His own sexuality informed all his works, but was embodied most openly in his novel Maurice, which was finished in 1914 but not published until after his death. The novel tells of the growing self-awareness of a Cambridge graduate who eventually finds love with a gamekeeper, and the turning point takes place in the galleries of the British Museum, on an evening when ‘the great building suggested a tomb, miraculously illuminated by the spirits of the dead’. Here the two men quarrel and reach an understanding of love, as rough trade turns into romance and an enduring relationship. Forster himself found happiness with a married policeman.


The ‘discobulus’ statue in the Egyptian sculpture gallery of the British Museum in 1857. The statue is a Roman copy of a lost Greek original and was found in Hadrian’s villa at Tivoli.

H. (photograph) 76 cm; W. 71 cm.
A Little Gay History
Desire and Diversity across the World
by R.B. Parkinson

How old is the oldest chat-up line between men? Who was the first ‘lesbian’?

This beautifully illustrated book provides a whirlwind tour of same-sex experiences throughout history, and builds a complex creative portrait of love’s many guises.

£9.99
Available now from all good bookshops.

Events:
• Book launch at Gay’s the Word Bookshop, 66 Marchmont Street WC1N 1AB, 27 June, 7pm. £2 payable on the door.

• Richard Parkinson will be discussing A Little Gay History at the British Museum, 28 June, 6.30pm. £5, members/concessions £3

• Richard Parkinson will introduce a screening of the film Maurice, at the BFI Southbank, 2 July, 6pm. £11, concessions £8.50

For free webtrails about same-sex desire in the British Museum’s collection, visit britishmuseum.org/samesexdesireandgenderidentity
Same-sex desire and gender identity

The evidence for same-sex desire and fluid ideas of gender has often been overlooked in the past, but museums and their collections can allow us to look back and see diversity throughout history.

Much of the historical evidence is centred around men and their concerns and often what survives is partial, fragmentary or ambiguous. Such things have often been hidden in history, and obscured by censorship, but now we realise the past is much ‘queerer’ than we have often thought.

This theme is based on an original web trail published on the Untold London website. Some images contain explicit scenes, though these are shown small (click to see larger versions).

Marble bust of the emperor Hadrian, Italy, AD 117-118, and Antinous, Italy, AD 130-140

Share this page

Same-sex desire

Gender identity

Changing attitudes

Evidence of desire between members of the same sex throughout human history

Gender roles vary between different cultures and are not a universal ‘given’

From persecution, through reform, awareness and towards equal rights

britishmuseum.org/samesexdesireandgenderidentity
An insightful and illuminating study of the depiction of homosexual love across millennia, and around the world, could hardly have come at a more opportune time, Tim Teeman writes

**A proud tradition of gay art**

The earliest known depiction of a couple making love, dating from around 9000BC, is made from a calcite pebble. Why are the "couple" presumed to be heterosexual, asks R.B. Parkinson, a curator of ancient Egyptian culture at the British Museum, in this slim, engaging volume of objects and vignettes.

The calcite figures resemble smashed-up milk-bottle sweets. "The sculpture's ambiguity is a reminder that we should not project our assumptions on to the past," writes Parkinson, embarking on an illuminating trawl of objects showing how representations of homosexuality have evolved across the millennia.

The British Museum is adept at bespoke historical exercises — most famously in its History of the World in 100 Objects — while this book is published in an emotionally and politically charged Pride month. In the UK, marriage equality edges nearer to law, with shamefu homophobia frothing from MPs and Lords. In the US, the Supreme Court is set to rule on the futures of the Defence of Marriage Act and Proposition 8, forbidding gay marriage in California. New York has been shaken by a series of alleged homophobic attacks and one murder. The spirit at Pride marches this year should be one of watchfulness as well as celebration.

The prejudice so freely expressed in the Lords last week was as significant as the positive end result, showing the corrosive persistence of homophobia. Parkinson's book, correspondingly, reminds us there is nothing new about homosexuality.

The author roves freely, from a 16th-century engraving of the Greek god Apollo and his beloved Hyacinthos to a 60-year-old "molly" (gay man) in the stocks in 1762. A coin shows the head of Sappho, the assumed-to-be-lesbian poet, horny young athletes decorate an ancient Greek pot and graphic lesbian sex is engraved on a 1st-century terracotta lamp. Here is a Mesopotamian panel of Ishtar, a goddess of sexual attraction and war who had the power to assign gender identity, and, on a tomb's walls, supposedly the first recorded gay kiss between Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, two male courtiers from around 2450BC.

The silver drinking Warren Cup, from AD10, shows a bearded man having sex with a beardless youth (this is "bear" culture, Roman style) and a beardless youth having sex with a younger male. Marble statues and sketches animate Dante's Inferno, Ganymede and Michelangelo's muscular young men; elsewhere are an androgynous Hindu deity, a 1627 painting of the Iranian ruler Shah Abbas I embracing a young page, illustrations revealing persecution of gays from the 18th century and kabuki actors sleeping with paying clients.

Modern times are represented by a David Hockney drawing of a male couple inspired by a C.P. Cavafy poem, gay activism badges, Aids memorials, the rainbow as Pride symbol and drag queen playing cards. "No heterosexuals were harmed in taking this picture," Parkinson writes beside a photograph of museum visitors — a droll note that gay equality damages no one. You can learn a lot from a calcite pebble.

**To order for £8.99 including postage**

Visit thetimes.co.uk/bookshop or call The Times Bookshop on 0845 2712134
Every year, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) History Month reminds us that sexual minorities are integral parts of world history. In 2009, that year's launch event took place at the British Museum and a thematic web trail was produced jointly with Unisoft London, exploring the diversity of gender and human desire across world cultures. A paper version of the Museum's trail proved so popular that a book, A Little Gay History, has just been published, with new expanded web trails. Minorities have too often been excluded from the official histories produced by cultural heritage institutions. As presentations of the British Museum's project at international conferences on LGBT history have shown, there are clearly a widely felt need for inclusive histories by national museums. The Museum's project is aimed at all audiences, regardless of gender or sexuality, and the fully illustrated gift book examines forty or so objects from the collection. These range from Ancient Egyptian papyri to modern badges and illustrate how varied the cultural constructions of same-sex desire have been. They also show how such desire has existed in many different cultures — it is apparently a universal human phenomenon. Some of the objects concern iconic LGBT figures, such as Hadrian or Michelangelo, but others are less well-known, such as the German ceramicist Augusta Kaiser, or are even anonymous, such as one Native American in a depiction of 1902.

Ancient Greek statues of naked men, of course, have often made museums important to many gay individuals' sense of identity, but as the book's main author I thought that it should explore the British Museum's own specific role in this history. E.M. Forster's novel Maurice tells of the growing self-awareness of a Cambridge graduate who eventually finds love with a gamekeeper. The turning point takes place in the Museum's Greek galleries, on a late afternoon when 'the great building suggested a tomb, miraculously illuminated by the spirits of the dead.' Here the two men quarrel and reach an understanding of love, as rough trade turns into romance and an enduring relationship.

The setting of this love scene in the Museum underlines Maurice's realisation that 'there have always been people like me and there always will be', and this lies at the heart of any LGBT history project. The book is a visual survey and, citing the novel, we wanted to represent it with a still from the 1976 Merchant Ivory film, widely regarded as a masterpiece and to my mind the greatest of all gay films. Thanks to the generosity and support of director James Ivory the book includes several images, and this remains for me a personal highlight of the whole project. Unlike in classical Greece, same-sex romance has often been silent in modern European works of art; how many tell love stories between members of the same sex, and when they do, how many of these have a happy ending?

Ismail Merchant and James Ivory shot the film at the height of the AIDS crisis and the Thatchers era, but they filmed it in exactly the same way as as their earlier A Room with a View, moving from a period boy-meets-girl story to this period boy-meets-boy story. There is nothing stereotypical about the film, just pure Victorian romance on a grand scale, which quietly and heroically insists on the right to equality in love. And, unlike Ang Lee's more moving and touching Brokeback Mountain, it has a happy ending, the result of an early evening visit to the British Museum.

Drawing on works of art such as these, the book tries to show that no one need feel alone or marginal in history because of their sexuality. It is not an attempt to make the collection 'gay', because there is no need to do this as E.M. Forster realised, the British Museum's collection always has been, and always will be, as diverse as the people who created it.
The British Museum has just published A Little Gay History by curator R. B. Parkinson. The book draws on around forty objects in the museum's collection ranging from ancient Egyptian papyri (click paper made from reeds, useful in the days before Grindy) to works by modern artists like David Hockney to look at same-sex desire across 11,000 years and throughout world cultures. Gay's The Word's Ulli Lamart reports...

The evidence for same-sex desire has often been overlooked in the past. Parkinson's book, A Little Gay History, seeks to redress this bias by showing that gay love and gay sex has been around for a very long time. What’s homosexual in a modern European term for heterosexuals wasn’t always a label; behaviors and practices that resemble it, the artifacts curated in this book, and in the museum itself, clearly show that same-sex desire was a normal, Western experience (or at times at least damaging). So what were our gay forbears like? What did they get up to? What were their hot spots? And was it really that different to now? Here are six teaser facts from the book:

1. The oldest chat up line in human history is between men. Same-sex desire seems to have been part of human experience from the earliest recorded times. In a poem from ancient Egypt, around 1800 BC, one male god tries to seduce another by saying “What a lovely backside you have!”

2. Outside poetry, no-male couples are known from Ancient Egypt: when two men are buried together, it seems that they are not next to lovers, as in this funerary inscription from 1325 BC.

3. The ‘Worm Cup’ is a surprisingly small but drawn scenes of men making love. Made in the Roman Empire around 1st–2nd AD, it is now known as the ‘Modern Lover’. The American artist iconoclast Edward Perry Watson (1945–1989) was the first to recognize the link between the vessel and the ancient Roman culture. He then used it as a base for his ‘Modern Lover’ series, which has been exhibited throughout the world.

4. Many societies in the eastern Pacific or Polynesia accepted same-sex acts, much to the consternation of 18th century European explorers. In Hawaii, young masculine men called akua would have sex with the king. A surgeon on Captain Cook’s ship The Discovery noted in 1778 with some surprise that “it is an office that is esteemed honourable among them & they have frequently saved us on a voyage from a handsome young fellow if he was not an [official] to some of us.” This highly stylized treasure box from New Zealand includes a scene of oral sex.

5. The British Museum has itself been a stage for gay love. Its displays of Greek and Roman statues have helped shaped modern gay identity. In E. M. Forster’s novel Maurice, a Cambridge graduate finds love with a gamekeeper, and the turning point comes in the galleries of the British Museum. Here the two men finally realise they love each other, as rough trade turns into romance. The book was made into a film in 1987 starring Hugh Grant using the original locations in the galleries: gay romance on a grand scale, and with a happy ending too.

6. The British Museum has objects about modern sexuality as well as ancient. Its collections of badges include ones for LGBT rights, representing over four decades and a wide range of issues. Some are serious, and some wittily caricature stereotypes about gay identity. And the Museum has other historic links with the struggle for equal rights: Lord Wolfenden, whose 1957 report recommended the decriminalisation of homosexuality, was also a director of the British Museum in the 1970s.

A Little Gay History has just been published at £9.99 and is available from Gay’s the Word, the British Museum bookshop and other retailers. Gay’s the Word will be hosting an event for the book on Thursday 27th June at 7pm (£3) and there will be a lecture at the British Museum on the 18th June at 6.30pm (£5) to celebrate the launch.
A LITTLE GAY HISTORY

DESIRE AND DIVERSITY ACROSS THE WORLD

R. B. PARKINSON

Stonewall Honor Book

American Library Association
MUSEUMSREIF

Während sich die großen deutschen Museen schwieren, Homosexualität zu thematisieren, präsentiert das ehrwürdige British Museum in London mit dem brillanten Buch „A Little Gay History“ vor – dank eines beherrschten Ägyptologen

Zuerst war mir nicht sicher, was das sein könne, „A Little Gay History“ stand auf dem Cover. Und ich dachte: Verdachtlich, noch so ein Sammelbinder, wo die sogenannten „Standardbilder“ zur schwulen Geschichte mehr oder weniger gut kommentiert zusammengefügt sind ... Gibt’s das nicht schon handelsfähig? Ja, gibt es. Aber die Überraschung ist, dass diese „Little Gay History“ mit dem Untertitel „Desire and Diversity Across the World“ ganz anders ist und auf revolutionäre Weise die Konnektivität weit hinein lässt.


Dass beginnt wirklich an einem Tag, als ich das Museum besuchte und im Shop das Buch sah. Ich dachte: Was macht die Akademie der Ägyptologen da?" hält sich im Museum auf, und die wenig akademischen, aber sehr humorvollen Witzbander sollten ein wenig dazu beitragen, die schwulen Geschichte aufzuzeigen. Und tatsächlich, das Buch fand schnell eine breite Akzeptanz unter den Besuchern.

Ein Buch mit höchsten Erwartungen

Das Buch war ein großes Ereignis in der Welt der Geschichtswissenschaft. Es zeigte eine neue Sicht auf die Geschichtsübersicht und schuf eine Plattform für die Gesprächsformen, die bald als ein weiblicher, aber genauso berechtigter Weg in die Wissenschaft erschienen wurden.

Ohne Richard Parkinson würde es „A Little Gay History“ nicht geben

Richard Parkinson war einer der ersten, die sich mit dem Thema Geschichtswissenschaft und Geschlecht betraut haben und dafür eine wichtige Rolle gespielt haben. Seine Arbeiten wurden in der Wissenschaft hoch angesehen und haben viele andere in die Geschichtswissenschaft stürzen lassen.


Genauso wie das British Museum mit seiner Kaiser-Hadrian-Anstellung, in der auf die „Imperial-Enzyklopädie“, die Bühnen von Hadrian und Antinous aus dem alten Rom, zeigen

Zeichnung von Suzuki Hananobu, Japan, 1770

Das Buch liegt im Museumshop aus
A bold and progressive move by one of the world's most global (and oldest) #museums: http://t.co/Rl2qpiAvkt @LondonLGBTPrId @britishmuseum

Will/would/could @metmuseum develop something like this? RT @globalmuseum: British Museum launches gay guide dlvr.it/3Y8Qnh

Well done @britishmuseum! RT @dinoboy89: British Museum launches gay guide http://t.co/IAUjgbVY5U

booking my train ticket as I type: British Museum launches gay guide http://t.co/jALnzqm8jw

British Museum launches gay guide. I really want to go. http://t.co/5jVUfpZRcE

Fucking awesome: British Museum launches gay audio guide http://t.co/lvHxsFniDo
The British Museum
Antinous as Osiris

Antinous was the lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (reigned AD 117–138). In AD 130 Hadrian and his imperial entourage were touring Egypt when Antinous drowned in mysterious circumstances. This tragic event happened on the same day the locals were commemorating the death, by drowning in the Nile, of the Egyptian god Osiris.

Antinous is shown here as Osiris, suggesting that he too was reborn as a god from the waters of the Nile. The stance, headdress and loincloth resemble Egyptian statues, but have been slightly altered in a classical, naturalistic and subtly eroticised style. The statue was discovered in 1738–39 near what we now know as a spectacular memorial to Antinous at Hadrian’s Villa.

Vatican Museums, Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Egizio. 22795

Hadrian: Empire and Conflict

Other statues of Antinous and fragments from his memorial are on display in the current special exhibition in the Reading Room.
On sent que vous rejetez le centre. Vous ne pouvez pas y vivre.

Le centre est partout. Le centre est où nous sommes. Pour le moment, le centre, c’est cette table.

Marguerite Yourcenar in conversation with Bernard Pivot, 1979
LSE Spectrum Literary Festival lecture

A Little Gay History

Professor Richard Parkinson
Professor of Egyptology, University of Oxford

Sue Donnelly
Chair, LSE

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSElitfest