

Job Description

Job Title:	Postdoctoral Researcher; Religious imagery and material culture c.200 to 800 CE x 3
Reports to:	Research Keeper: Empires of Faith
Department:	Directorate
Grade:	C3C

Main purpose of Job:

To carry out research, individually or in collaboration with other programme staff, on different aspects of religious imagery and material culture and their political and social contexts in the time period c.200 to 800 CE in one or more religious traditions and polities from the Mediterranean to South Asia. The research to support the broad objectives of the Leverhulme Trust funded *Empires of Faith* research programme, and to lead to academic publication and to support web content, public programming and, possibly, display.

Key Responsibilities [in order of priority]:

- Develop and delivery major pieces of research on the questions and subjects that support the overall objectives of the *Empires of Faith* research programme to final academic publication.
- Collaborate with, and support, other members of the project to deliver research.
- Contribute to dissemination of Project's research, within British Museum and externally
- Update Museum records and collections database information as necessary.
- Other duties as directed

What are the main work pressures and challenges?

- Working with the programme leader, other project colleagues and research students at the Museum and the University of Oxford, while working independently to deliver key project deadlines
- Developing and conducting individual research projects within the context of a larger research programme directed by the programme leader.
- Meeting project milestones within defined timeframe, including delivery of publications.
- Working in a project that has two bases, London and Oxford.
- The ability to network to find appropriate expertise and assistance in areas outside of one's personal specialization.
- Collaborating with, and supporting the work of, other team members, while also carrying out their own research.
- Having the ability to understand wider context of their research and the programme's research, particularly in relation to the British Museum collections.

Key Dimensions [eg number of staff directly managed, budget responsibilities, specific authority levels, types of decisions taken etc]:

- No staff to be managed in British Museum.
- Responsibility for delivery of research and other programme elements agreed with the Programme Leader.
- Co-ordination and working with colleagues in the Museum and University of Oxford

What are the performance targets or standards?

- Delivering research and publications as agreed with the Programme leader.
- Delivery of web content, displays and public programming to support the programme as agreed with the Programme Leader.

What changes are likely to occur in the next two years to this job?

- The British Museum is going through a period of restructuring which will indirectly impact on the post.

Who are the main contacts of the jobholder and what are the relationships to these contacts [eg managing, influencing, advising]?

- The jobholder will work to the Programme Leader and with programme post-doctoral researchers, research students and other Museum staff as part of a team, and will engage directly with staff across the museum on a project basis.

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Education - levels & subjects	Higher Degree in Art History, Archaeology or related subject with focus on religious traditions, cultures and politics from the Mediterranean to South Asia c.200 to 800 CE <u>Or</u> in a related subject that can inform the study of religious and political imagery c.200 to 800 CE in new ways	Evidence of research or education that crosses religious traditions and cultures
Other qualifications	Research and/or Museum experience	Language skills in French and/or German – and/or appropriate ancient and modern languages
Specific technical/professional skills & experience	Experience or demonstrated knowledge of appropriate material and visual culture and/or academic perspectives that can inform the study of appropriate material and/or visual culture	Experience working with or researching objects; Experience in areas of digital humanities
Work experience, likely former jobs	Research assistant on research project; Museum curation	Experience of preparing publications
Specific managerial skills	Some experience of project management	
Specific interpersonal skills	Excellent teamwork, good verbal and written communication skills	Experience in relating cross-culturally
Publications record (if appropriate)	Own academic publications in preparation or already published	

Additional Information

The British Museum is wishing to appoint three fully-funded 4-year Postdoctoral Researchers, financed by the Leverhulme Trust. The researchers will form the heart of a large research programme led by Dr. Jas' Elsner (Oxford), to investigate the creation of religious iconographies and their political and cultural contexts from the Mediterranean World to South Asia c. 200-800 AD.

The Project

The research programme seeks to address the following questions through detailed case studies and comparative research:

- Why did new religious imagery and iconographies emerge in different religious traditions across parts of Europe and Asia in the period AD 200-800? To what extent were these independent or interdependent developments, and how did they enable the rise of new forms of political and religious authority?
- What were the particular properties of images and objects – and text as image – in this period that made them especially significant in constructing, embodying, and mediating new forms of political and religious authority?

The geographic scope of the project is extremely wide -- from Britain and Spain in the west to the South Asia and Central in the east. Among the religions whose imagery will be explored are not only those that have survived (Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam as well as the polytheisms of India) but also many lost religions from the cults of the Roman Empire to Manichaeism.

The aim will be to put the best of new and current research on late antique religious history and archaeology in the University side by side with the unparalleled scholarly and material resources of the Museum, in an experiment in intellectual collaboration between the two institutions in the United Kingdom with the greatest strengths in the material culture of late antiquity. The intention will be both to forge a method for doing a global comparative art history of religions, within the specific temporal and geographical limitations of the project, and to produce a series of fundamental studies on key themes of religious change, self-assertion and identity through visual means. Few research projects have ever before attempted to take such a panoptic view of this subject, region, and period. Only by looking at this area as an interconnected whole, and by bringing together perspectives from a wide range of academic specialisms and disciplines will these vital features of this pivotal period – and their continuing legacy – be able to be properly understood.

The Empires of Faith project offers exceptional opportunities for both individual research in a specific area within the development of art and iconography and for collaborative work not only in the comparative history of late antique religion and art but also on the ways objects and collections have framed the approaches to it. Fellows will be expected to work towards major pieces of research individually and collaboratively with other project members.

Required Skills:

You will be educated to at least doctoral level or equivalent in a subject relevant to the role, for example Archaeology, History, Study of Religion or Art History. You will have a demonstrable knowledge of the arts, material culture, history and/or religion of one or more of the cultural groups relevant to the geographical and chronological scope of the project. Excellent teamwork and communication skills are essential for this role, as well as knowledge of languages other than English. Experience of working on an exhibition and demonstrable knowledge of relevant material and visual culture is desirable but not essential. You must also have a clear commitment to researching larger questions comparatively and researching these questions through material culture and images.

We also welcome applications from candidates with backgrounds in the study of religion, or of religious and political material culture and imagery in other periods and contexts that can bring different perspectives to this project.

The Postdoctoral Researchers will be employed by the British Museum, based in a curatorial department that best fits their subject specialism. Members of the project will work both at Wolfson College, Oxford and in the British Museum, and will have the opportunity to learn the skills of hands-on curatorial expertise as well as pursuing a programme of research. The Researchers will automatically be elected to Research Membership of Common Room at Wolfson College, and will be encouraged to enter the College's competition for non-stipendiary Research Fellowships or Junior Research Fellowships.

The postholders' normal place of work will be in Wolfson College, Oxford during University term time, and at the British Museum for the remainder of the year. A season ticket on the Oxford Tube will be provided.

Applications should include in the section of the form marked 'Additional Information' a brief statement (no more than 2 sides) proposing a programme of research within the scope of the Empires of Faith Project.

For further information about this research programme and these positions please contact Jas' Elsner (jelsner@cc.ox.ac.uk).

Employee Benefits

Salary

The agreed starting salary for this post is non-negotiable and clearly stated on the advert and covering letter. Normal salary arrangements apply for internal applicants upon promotion or level transfer.

Pension Benefits

British Museum employees are eligible to join the Civil Service pension schemes, you will be provided with information to assist you in making your choice.

Hours

Full time roles are based on a 5 day week of 41 hours including a daily lunch break of one hour.

Annual Leave

The annual leave allowance is 25 days, rising to 30 days after 10 years service. The annual leave year commences on 1 April and new staff will receive their annual leave allowance on joining. In addition there are 10 ½ days public and privileges days. Leave for part-time staff will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Additional Benefits

Are subject to change but currently include access to a subsidised restaurant, the opportunity to purchase books, replicas and other items from the Museum shops at discount prices. Museum staff also have access to a Personal Support Service through Vielifit. There are free eye tests for VDT users and assistance with the purchase of glasses if appropriate

Season Ticket or Bicycle Loan

After two months in post, staff on permanent contracts (or contracts longer than two years) will be eligible to apply for an interest free loan to purchase a season ticket or bicycle

Guidance Notes for Applicants

These notes are intended to guide you through The British Museum's application procedure and help you to participate in the selection process as effectively as possible. Please read these notes carefully before completing your application.

Job Description/Person Specification

The job description and person specification that outline the purpose, main duties and responsibilities of the job as well as the knowledge, skills and experience that we are looking for. It is essential that you read the person specification thoroughly before completing the application form so that you are able to assess how your experience fits with the requirements for the post.

Application Form

The first stage of the selection process is your completion of the application form. This allows us to shortlist applicants for interview and provides a basis for the interview itself. To ensure fairness to all applicants, any decision during the initial sift is based solely upon the information that you include in your application form.

ELIGIBILITY TO WORK IN THE UK

Please ensure that you give details of any restrictions that you have to work in the EU. If you are selected for interview you will be asked to provide us with proof of your eligibility to work in the UK (e.g. passport or Home Office visa). Additionally, under the asylum and immigration act, we are required to check that anyone taking up employment with us has the legal right to work in the EU.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Please give details of your full educational career including any qualifications that you have obtained and any further scholarships/awards that you feel would help your application.

EMPLOYMENT

Please give details of all of your previous employment for the past 10 years, beginning with your current/most recent post. If you are successful after interview we will need to contact your last employer and another previous employer before we are able to offer you the post.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

This is your opportunity to give us any further additional information about why you have applied for this post, including experience that you feel is relevant to the main tasks and essential criteria, as outlined in the job description and person specification.

DECLARATION

It is essential that you read the declaration before submitting your application form. Successful candidates may be disqualified later if any information given on the application form is found to be false.

Short Listing

Short listing prior to interview will take place as soon as possible after the closing date for applications and will be carried out by at least two people. Short listing will be based upon how closely candidates have demonstrated they fit the criteria, as set out on the job description and person specification.

Interview

Short listed candidates will be normally contacted by email and given details of the interview date, time, location and any special requirements. If you are able to attend the interview you must confirm with the Human Resources that you wish to do so. The interview process may vary from post to post, any activities such as tests or presentations that we require you to undertake as part of the selection process will be outlined in your invitation to interview.

Offer of Employment

All offers of employment from The British Museum are subject to satisfactory references, health and security clearances.

Data Protection

Information that you provide for the purpose of your application will be used as part of the recruitment process. Any data supplied will be held securely and access restricted to those involved in dealing with your application and the recruitment and selection process. Once this process is completed, the data relating to unsuccessful applicants will be stored for a maximum of 6 months and then destroyed. If you are the successful candidate, your application form will be retained and form the basis of your personnel record. Information provided on the Diversity Monitoring Form will be used to monitor The British Museum's equal opportunities policy and practices.

All processing of personal data by The British Museum is undertaken in accordance with the principles of the 1998 Data Protection Act. For more information please go to:
<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/guidance/DataProtectionCodeofPractice.pdf>