

Art History Through the Ages

Brent Museum and Archives



Introduction

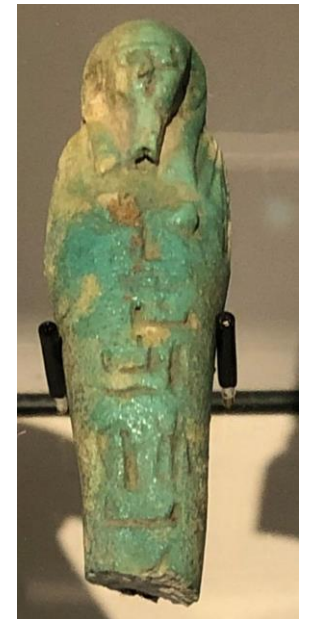
- Join us on a tour of artefacts on display at Brent Museum and Archives at The Library at Willesden Green from 2000BC to 21st century
- We are focusing on 11 objects from over 10,000 items cared for by Brent Museum and Archives.
- A Victorian collector called George Titus Barham, donated his collection of precious objects to the people of Wembley in 1937. This was the start of the museum.
- Do you have anything you'd like to donate which could reflect your life and history of this area?

When you look at an object please think about the following questions

- What materials do you think the object is made of?
- What do you think this would feel like to touch? Hard, soft, cold?
- Have you seen something like this before?
- How old do you think it is?
- Using the information you have gathered from your questions so far, what do you think it is for?
- Do you like it? Do you not like it? Either is fine, but can you explain why?

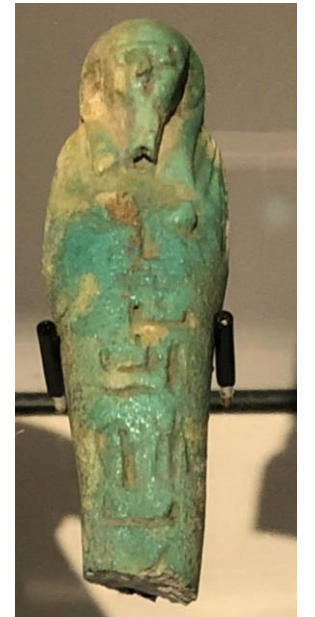
Artefacts 1. Egyptian Shabti Figures

- These small figurines were placed in Ancient Egyptian tombs, from 2000BC until c.300BC
- They're made from Egyptian faience
- 'Shabti' means 'the answerer' in Egyptian – these figures were thought to answer the owner's call to help in the afterlife
- They are usually in the form of mummies, as they are here
- Originally they were shaped to look like their owners, and these figurines acted as a surrogate in case the owner's mummy was damaged



Artefacts 1. Egyptian Shabti Figures

- Later after 1550BC shabtis were supposed to act more like servants for the master (the dead person) so the figures sometimes carried bags or farmer's tools.
- Do you think these figures are examples of the earlier or later style?
- Sometimes the deceased would have as many as 401 shabtis (one servant for each day of the year and 36 overseer servant-shabtis for each Egyptian 10 day weeks)
- Egyptian faience is made out of quartz which, when it is heated up, through a process called vitrification, the outer layer turns into a sort of green or blue glass.



Artefacts 1. Egyptian Shabti Figures

- Quartz is a kind of mineral found in the ground – it is extremely hard-wearing and heat-resistant. It is used today in electrical goods and in clocks: the stone vibrates and helps to keep time.
- Which colour do you prefer? It gives a shiny, glassy feel to it. If you were to hold it, what would it feel like?
- Can you copy the shape of the shabtis?
- Can you see what decorations are painted in black on the blue shabti's garments? Can you copy some of these designs?
- Would you like a 10 day week like the Egyptians?

Artefacts 1. Egyptian Shabti Figures - related artefact



Here is another shabti, which is on display at [Brooklyn Museum](#). We can see more of the decoration on this shabti figure, possibly because it was more carefully made or because it has been damaged less over the years.

Can you see that the hieroglyphs on the fabric are like the ones on the deep blue one on display at Brent Museum and Archives?

This shabti shows a woman called Lady Sati who lived in the 14th century BC. There were no photographs when this shabti was made but it's a little bit like going back in time to be able to see what this lady might have looked like.



Artefacts 2. Roman coins

- The Romans invaded Britain in AD43 under the Emperor Claudius. They brought Roman customs and their currency with them. Here are some of the coins they left behind
- Do you have any coins in your pocket? Whose face is on them?
- What can you see on these coins?
- Can you see the faces of leaders at the time? Can you see Lucilla (it is easier to see during a visit to Brent Museum and Archives) who was the wife of a statesman? The others are all male emperors.
- What is the position of the faces? Profile.
- Can you see the words in Latin around the edge?
- What are these made from? Do you think they are they light or heavy, soft or sharp?



Artefacts 2. Roman coins

Did you know...

- Portrait come from the French words 'pour' meaning 'for' and 'trait' which means 'line'
- A 'portrait' was supposed to be a 'line for line' image of a person, a physical copy of what they looked like
- However, in English, the word 'trait' also refers to someone's character, so ideally, a portrait should show you something of what they were like as a person as well as what they look like on the outside

Artefact 3. 15th century horseshoe

- [Have you ridden on a horse?](#)
- Horseshoes are used to protect the horses' hooves from tough ground, just like our feet need shoes
- They are usually made from metal like this one, by a blacksmith and attached to the horse by a farrier, and are hammered into the horses hooves (the part that they don't feel) using nails.



Artefact 3. 15th century horseshoe

- The horse that wore this shoe lost it in what is now the Edgware Road. Not many horses seen around there now!
- Before the motorcar, horses were the main way of transporting people and things. The fastest a horse can maintain a gallop is about 8 miles an hour, so people couldn't travel very far or fast until a hundred years ago
- Would you prefer to get to school on a horse or in your car?
- What do you think this object feels like?

Artefact 4. Carved stone head, Willesden, Middle Ages

- This is a sculpture of a head found very near Brent Museum and Archives at The Library at Willesden Green
- Do you think it is of a man or woman?
- Is it carved finely or roughly?
- It's probably a male figure from the Bible
- It could be from the Holy Well at the Shrine of Our Lady of Willesden
- Someone removed this from a church, but we don't know why. Perhaps during the Reformation.



Artefact 4. Carved stone head, Willesden, Middle Ages

Religious Statues

- Many faiths have depictions of the gods being worshipped to help us visualise the god we are worshipping
- Christians often have pictures of Jesus and stories of the Bible in churches to help congregants learn about Jesus and to help them feel close to him
- In Islam, however, it is not permitted to portray Allah as it is thought he is too perfect or holy to be portrayed
- This stone head was once part of a whole figure statue
- During the Middle Ages, people went on pilgrimages (religious journeys) to visit a holy place where they could say special prayers asking God to help them.
- Near here at Willesden was a special shrine to Mary, who was the mother of Jesus.
- The next slides show some other religious images – are these familiar to you?

Artefact 4. Carved stone head, Willesden, Middle Ages
- related artefacts. Religious painting: Noli Me Tangere (Jesus and Mary Magdalene), Fra Angelico, 1440





Artefact 4. Carved stone head, Willesden, Middle Ages - related artefacts. Religious statue: Shakyamuni Buddha, 14th century

- This statue is made out of gilt-copper alloy
- It was used as an object to help Buddhists worship Buddha
- This was on sale at an auction house, Bonhams, in 2020 for £65,000-85,000
- [What do you notice about the statue?](#)
- Yoga is partly based on Buddhist practices

Artefact 5. Suit of Armour, 17th century

- What is armour for? Protection during warfare
- This suit of armour was probably used during the Civil War of 1642-1651 and has lasted since then!
- It is made from steel, why? Why does it have multiple plates to make up the cuisse? (This means 'thigh' in French) – to help the wearer move and run more easily. What would be worn underneath? Chainmail
- Often armour was designed for a specific person to fit their body shape, so we can imagine the shape of this person's body. Horses also wore armour to protect them for the guns (muskets) and pikes (long spikes as weapons).



Artefact 5. Suit of Armour, 17th century.

Civil war - 1642-1651

- The Civil War was fought between those supporting King Charles I (the Royalists or Cavaliers) and those supporting Oliver Cromwell (the Parliamentarians or the Roundheads) deciding how Britain should be governed.
- **Should the monarch have total rule or parliament rule?**
- Charles I wanted total rule, 'the divine right of kings' whereas Parliament wanted more power themselves
- The Parliamentarians eventually won, and King Charles was beheaded in 1649 and his son was forced into exile in France.
- Charles was thought by his opponents to be too High Church and close to Catholicism, too profligate with his money but unable to raise taxes to pay for the country's needs
- **Which side would you fight on?**

Artefact 5. Suit of Armour, 17th century – related artefacts:
paintings of Oliver Cromwell and King Charles I



Cromwell



King Charles I

Artefact 5. Suit of Armour, 17th century – related artefacts:
interpretative illustration of the Battle of Lansdown Hill,
the West Country, 1643



Artefacts 6. Coffee cup and saucer, 1750-1850



Artefacts 6. Coffee cup and saucer, 1750-1850

- Coffee came to England in the mid-17th century through the British East India Company trade with the Middle East
- The first coffee shop is thought to have been in England in Oxford, called the Grand Café in 1650
- Coffee quickly became a fashionable drink and coffee houses were hubs of religious and political debate and activity, with Charles II trying to ban them as he was worried people would start a revolt against him
- By 1675 there were 3000 coffee houses in London alone
- Only men were allowed to drink coffee and the only women visiting were prostitutes
- Rich people could drink coffee from cups and saucers like this

Artefacts 6. Coffee cup and saucer, 1750-1850

- This cup and saucer are made from porcelain, which is clay that has been heated up at an extreme temperature in a kiln. The cup was molded, then painted and then re-fired so that the paint doesn't come off.
- The 'ground' colour here is a beautiful deep blue. It looks like Vincennes porcelain which was invented in Vincennes in France and looks like the night sky in colour.
- These items were decorated with a delicate gold paint around the rim of the coffee cup, on the handle and on the saucer.
- There is also a painted outdoor scene of some peasants, one of whom is smoking a pipe and the one with a feather in his hat is drinking
- **What else can you spot in the background?**
- Porcelain is hard and smooth and is an ideal surface for delicate paintwork, even though often it's a very small area!
- **What designs would you draw on a coffee cup?**

Artefacts 6. Coffee cup and saucer, 1750-1850 - related artefacts: Vincennes porcelain cup, c.1740



Artefacts 6. Coffee cup and saucer, 1750-1850 - related artefacts: Vincennes teapot, c.1745, Wallace Collection



Artefacts 7. Victorian lady's day dress, 1840s

- This dress was worn by someone who lived very nearby, possibly even on your street!
- This is what a fairly wealthy person would have worn in the daytime
- It is high-necked and long sleeved and down to the ground, so you would hardly see any skin, which was thought the most polite way of dressing
- This is made from painted fabric, probably cotton, decorated with roses and sprigs of leaves and lifelike flowers



Artefacts 7. Victorian lady's day dress, 1840s

- Can you see the buttons down the front?
- The dress also has sage green and white trim on its bell-end sleeves to contrast with the rest of the pattern
- This skirt was probably supported by several petticoats underneath so that the skirt looked full and kept its stiff shape.
- These petticoats were made from horsehair or stiffened silk called crinolines



Artefacts 7. Victorian lady's day dress, 1840s

- Women had to wear corsets which squeezed in their tummies so their waists looked as small as possible. There is a corset in the drawer underneath the dress. Servants would tie the corsets tight at the back so it could be hard for the woman to breathe! Women don't have to wear corsets now but there is still the pressure in society for women to look a certain way.
- It has a V-shaped point at the waist made from piping which is mirrored in the V-shape at the neck
- This dress would be hard to move easily in, but women's lives didn't involve as much physical movement, sport, work or travel as men, so they didn't need to be able to move as fast.
- Can you imagine how you would walk and move in this outfit? Is it comfortable? Do you think it is beautiful?
- Would you like to wear this?

Artefacts 7. Victorian lady's day dress, 1840s – related artefact:
Victorian day dress, V&A Museum,
1848-50



What are the similarities and differences between the V&A Museum's dress and our dress at Brent?

Which do you prefer?



Artefacts 8. Art Deco vases



Artefacts 8. Art Deco vases. What is Art Deco?

- Art Deco is an art historical style known by its straight edges and modern decoration
- Art Deco is seen in furniture, architecture, fashion, objects, jewellery – almost everything!
- It rejected soft, natural-looking shapes and often had simplified modern looking designs.
- Can you see the oblong shapes of the blue vase and the green triangles in the right hand vase?
- It is seen in Europe and the USA in 1920s and 30s.
- These are made from ceramics again, but they look very different to the coffee cup and saucer we saw earlier in Artefacts 6.

Artefact 9. Bakelite telephone, 1960s design

- This is very different to a mobile phone today
- [Who has a landline at home?](#)
- Alexander Graham Bell invented the first telephone in 1876.
- This one is from a century after the invention
- This object came from The General Post Office Station at Dollis Hill, just around the corner!
- This is the [sound this phone made](#) when it rang



Artefact 9. Bakelite telephone, 1960s design

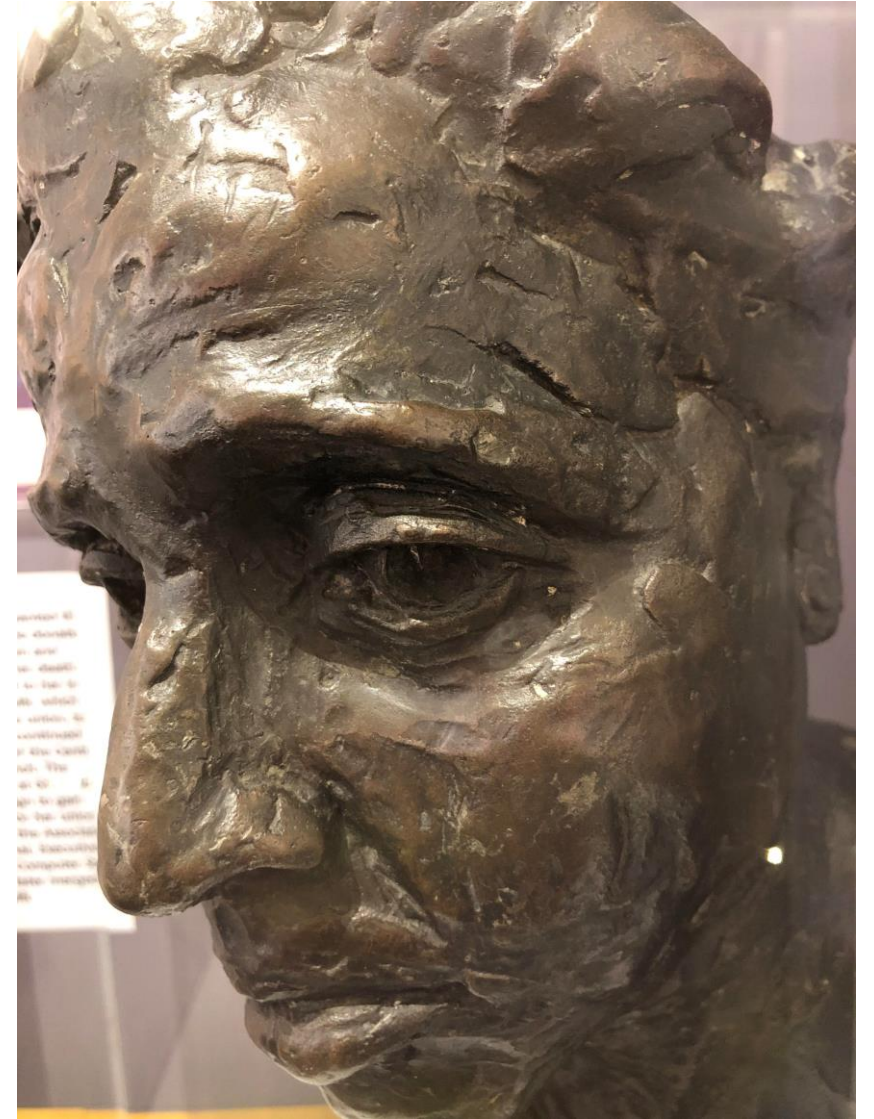
What is Bakelite?

- It's a man made plastic, invented in Germany in 1878 and first sold in the USA in 1909
- It's durable and lightweight and became very popular
- It could be molded into many shapes, like this telephone!



Artefact 10. Jayaben Desai, bronze sculpture

- Jayaben Desai was born in Gujarat, India in 1933 and led a strike in Willesden in 1976 campaigning for workers' rights.
- The working conditions in the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories where she worked were poor. She said it was more like a zoo, and she was paid very little money.
- Most of the factory workers were Asian women and suffered racism and sexism.
- She went on hunger strike to protest for her rights to be represented by a trade union
- **What emotional or characteristics do you think the sculpture was trying to portray? Have a look at the photograph on the next page as well to compare.**

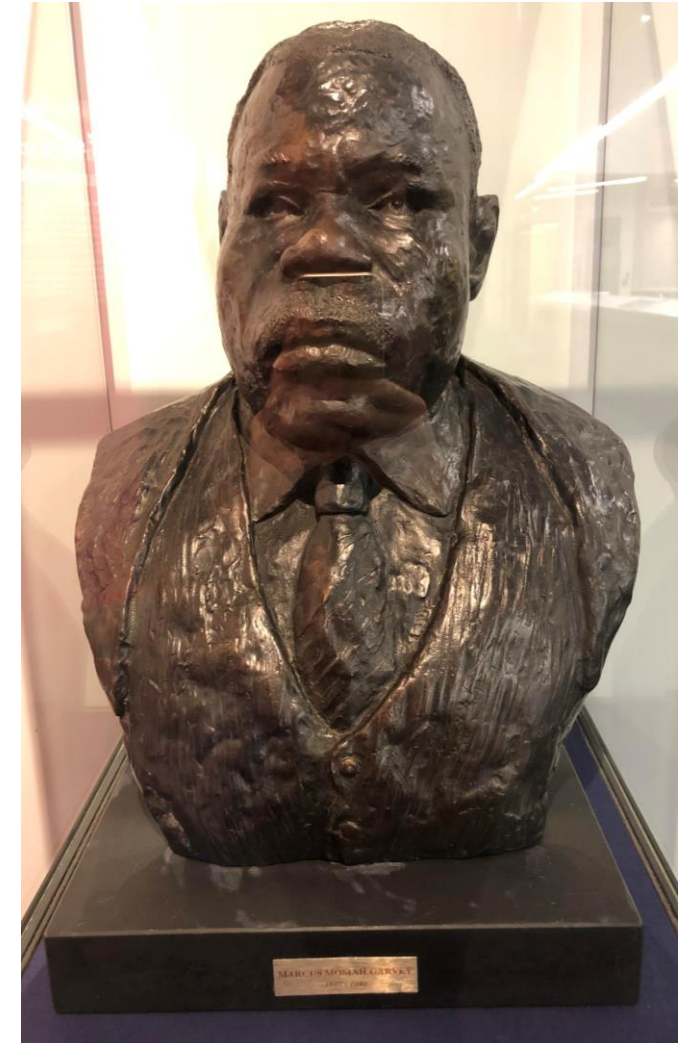


Artefact 10. Jayaben Desai, bronze sculpture – related artefacts:
photograph of Jayaben Desai with a placard



Artefact 11. Marcus Mosiah Garvey, bronze sculpture

- Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica in 1887 and first came to England in 1912. He loved museums and frequently went to the British Museum
- He encouraged pride and self-worth among Africans and people of colour
- He suffered from racism and campaigned for black nationalism. However, he believed in white and black segregation and that all people with an African heritage should live in Africa.
- Does this sculpture look like the photograph of him on the next slide? What emotions or characteristics was the sculpture trying to portray?



Artefact 11. Marcus Mosiah Garvey, bronze sculpture – related artefacts:

photograph of Marcus Garvey and his wife Amy Jacques, 1922 during a sightseeing tour of Cheyenne Canon in Colorado Springs. Mrs. Garvey is on a donkey.

