

Creating a mountmaking house-style and supporting training course at The British Museum

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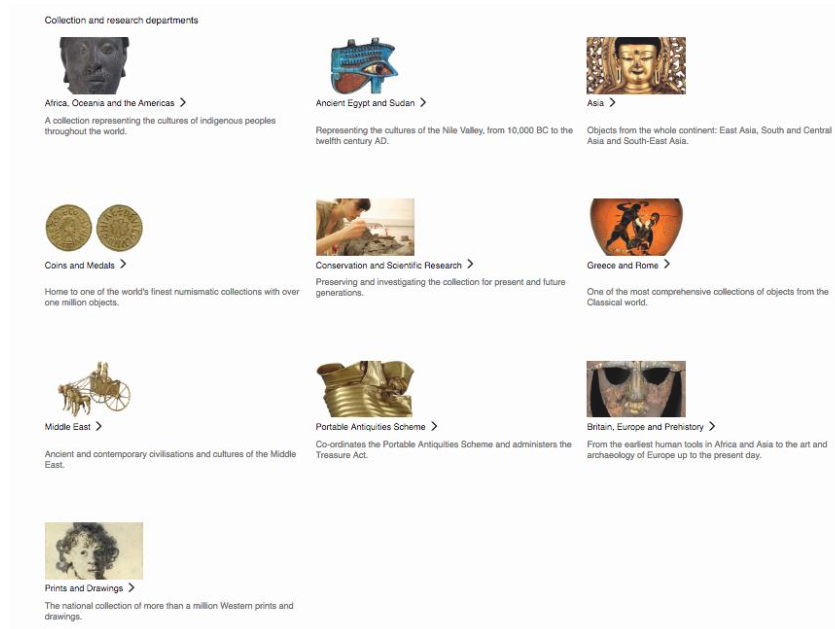
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Scope

The presentation will look at how The British Museum approached the **standardisation** of **mountmaking**, what the **in-house style guide** document includes, how the training course was developed, the course contents and supporting training material produced, including standard working procedures and associated courses.



Collections Management Review

The aim of the recent Collections Management Review at The British Museum was to bring together the diverse collections management function in order to create development opportunities, increase consistency and flexibility, improve collections care, and enable achievement of greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

Traditionally collections management was embedded within each of the eight collections departments, with mountmaking being undertaken in isolation within departmental based workshops for gallery specific objects.

The British Museum



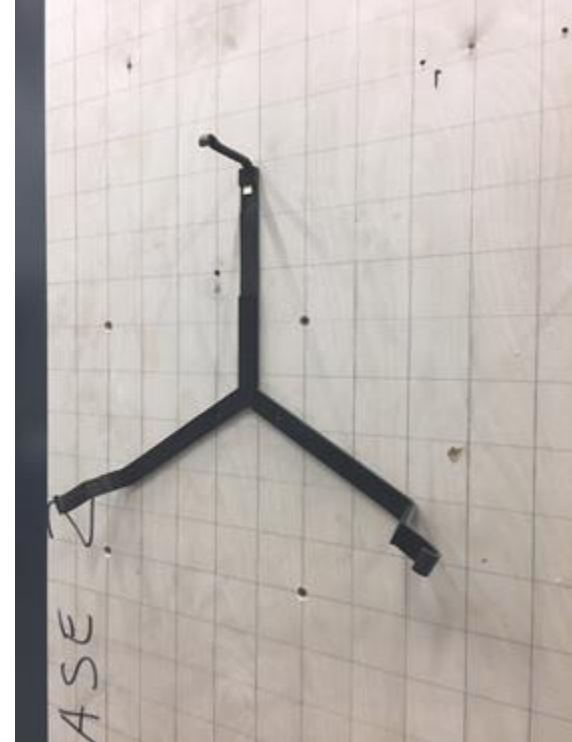
External contractors

If the mountmaking skills for specific objects were absent within a department, or excessive mounts were required for a permanent gallery refurbishment or temporary exhibition, then external mountmakers were contracted to meet the requirement.



Inconsistency

This resulted in inconsistent material choice and methods of fabrication within the museum and an overall incohesive feel to museum display.



Standardised mountmaking

Following the organisational restructure, mountmaking at The British Museum was finally in a position to be standardised.

Departmental workshops were disbanded and replaced by two large collections management workshops with hot works facilities.



Standardised house-style guide

A mountmaking training course was developed by skilled departmental mountmakers and a standardised house-style guide produced.

Standardisation has allowed the British Museum to improve the safety and quality of its displays and to achieve a recognisable and professional in-house style. This in-house style can be seen in the recently refurbished **Hotung**, **Japan** and **Islamic World** permanent galleries, all British Museum **temporary exhibitions**, **national and international touring exhibitions** and **reactive loans**.



Standardised house-style guide

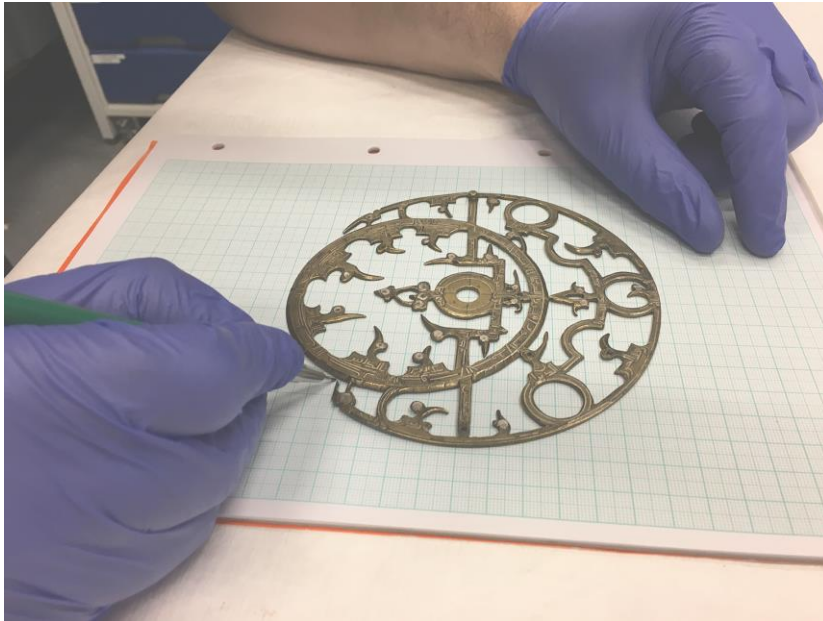
- 1. Introduction** Explores the purpose of the document; to facilitate the museum-wide production of mounts to the highest standards
- 2. Primary Aims of Mount Making** Looks at the most important considerations when mountmaking: *the safety of the object, discreteness of the mount and how aesthetically appropriate the mount is*
- 3. Materials and Techniques** Outlines the in-house style of the British Museum; to produce metal mounts using silver-soldered brass, painted in pre-determined colours

Level 1	Figure mounts, spider mounts, simple brackets (including drop brackets), acrylic scroll brackets
Level 2	Plate mounts, ring mounts, coin mounts, detachable arms requiring machine screw fittings, acrylic book mounts
Level 3	Complex multi-part mounts combining multiple techniques or using a mixture of materials such as steel, brass or shaped acrylic sections
Level 4	Mounts requiring the use of restricted equipment such as welding gear, the milling machine or the metal lathe.*

	High priority	Without a mount the object cannot be displayed
	Medium priority	The object could be pinned or supported by another method, but a mount would be preferable
	Low priority	Support is not essential, but aids display
	No mount required	

Standardised house-style guide

4. Assessing Difficulty and Priority Is coded using two tables that allow mountmaking levels and colours to be assigned to objects.



Standardised house-style guide

5. Types of Mounts This section identifies straightforward shapes for clasping objects

6. Design and selecting a type Looks at how to design basic mounts

7. Fabrication and Fitting Principles

8. Finishing *Painting, softening, transport and identification and the use of positioning templates*

9. Installing the mount in a case *Measuring up, drilling and cutting and uniformity*



Responding to design challenges

This exploded astrolabe design required a very complex metal mount solution



Replacing older mount styles

A soldered metal mount provides a more discreet mounting solution than the original Perspex mount.



Consistency of mount design across cases

Two types of musical instruments mounted in the same way.



Results achieved by in-house training

A metal mount made by a new member of collections management; this illustrates how the metal mountmaking training has enabled a new Assistant Collections Manager to fabricate a sophisticated mount after only a number of months in the role.



Mountmaking training course

A mountmaking training course was developed by skilled departmental mountmakers and supports the standardised house-style guide. The Metal Mountmaking training course is a two day course.

Trainers: Phil Jell, Simon Prentice, David Noden and Shelley Seston



Mountmaking training course

The two-day Metal Mountmaking course compliments the mountmaking in-house style guide.

Course Aims The aims of this course are to become familiar with a hot works workshop, gain an understanding of basic metalworking techniques and how to design and construct a basic metal mount.

Mountmaking training course

Day 1 - Objectives:

The session provides an introduction to the safe use of metal working hand tools and machinery and silver soldering. By the end of the day you will have made a brass 'L' bracket with two counter sunk holes and a number of fine brass mount blanks.

The first half of the session will look at: Preparing the components of a brass 'L' bracket, Learning to silver solder, Silver soldering the 'L' bracket components together

The second half of the session will look at: Annealing, Preparing the components of a fine 'spider mount' blank and silver soldering it together, Preparing the components of a 'man mount' blank and silver soldering it together

By the end of today's session you will:

Be confident using basic metal working hand tools and machinery

Understand the principles of silver soldering and be able to silver solder a simple but joint

Have fabricated a 'L' bracket, a 'spider mount' and a 'man mount'

Mountmaking training course



Basic exercises:

'L' bracket and fine 'spider' mount

Mountmaking training course

Day 2 - Objectives:

The session provides an introduction to the fundamentals of designing and fitting a metal mount. By the end of the day delegates will have fabricated and fitted a brass mount for either a training object or for a museum object that has been brought to the session.

The first half of the session will cover: Drawing and measuring objects and designing a metal mount

The second half of the session will cover: Fabricating and fitting a metal mount for an object of their choice

By the end of today's session delegates will:

Understand the basic principles of mount design and fitting

Have designed, fabricated and fitted a brass mount for an object of their choice

Be comfortable with the range of brass shapes and sizes available and understand the factors that influence your choice

Mountmaking training course



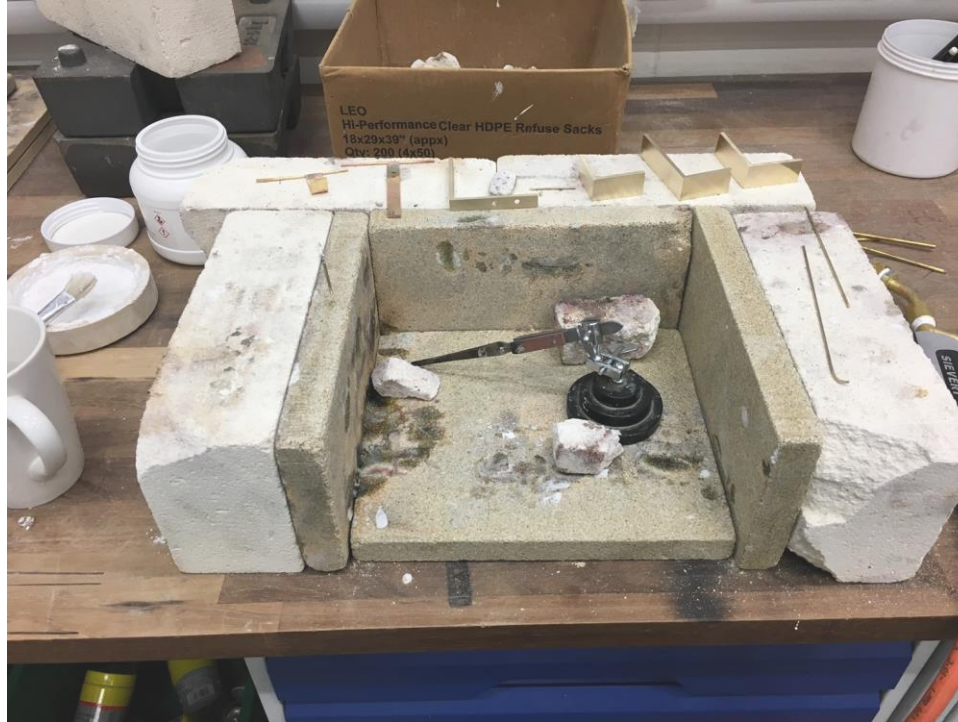
Basic exercises:

Small pot mount



Mounting up air miles!

The British Museum now produces all of its own mounts and sends thousands of objects all over the World with their own unique mount, many having to withstand continuous installation and de-installation and still perform!



Mounting has no boundaries

The emergence of the new united department has enabled the boundaries of traditional mountmaking to evolve, design creativity to thrive and has facilitated the investment in new tools and equipment in order to deliver new methods of mounting. A second **Advanced Metal Mountmaking** course is currently in development and looks to introduce delegates to mount finishing and more complex design and fabrication techniques.