

Press Release: **Life and death in Pompeii and Herculaneum**

28 March – 29 September 2013

Reading Room

Sponsored by Goldman Sachs

In Spring 2013 the British Museum will present a major exhibition on the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, sponsored by Goldman Sachs. This exhibition will be the first ever held on these important cities at the British Museum, and the first such major exhibition in London for almost 40 years. It is the result of close collaboration with the Archaeological Superintendency of Naples and Pompeii, which will bring together over 250 fascinating objects, both recent discoveries and celebrated finds from earlier excavations. Many of these objects have never before been seen outside Italy. The exhibition will have a unique focus, looking at the Roman home and the people who lived in these ill-fated cities.

Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum said "This will be a major exhibition for the British Museum in 2013, made possible through collaboration with the Archaeological Superintendency of Naples and Pompeii which has meant extremely generous loans of precious objects from their collections, some that have never travelled before. I am delighted that Goldman Sachs is sponsoring this important exhibition and am extremely grateful to them for their support."

"It is a privilege to be partnering with the British Museum for this incredibly exciting exhibition, which offers a fascinating insight into daily life at the heart of the Roman Empire", said Richard Gnodde, Co Chief executive of Goldman Sachs International. "We recognize the importance of supporting cultural platforms such as this and we are delighted to offer our support to help bring this unique experience to London."

Pompeii and Herculaneum, two cities on the Bay of Naples in southern Italy, were buried by a

catastrophic volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in just 24 hours in AD 79. This event ended the life of the cities but at the same time preserved them until rediscovery by archaeologists nearly 1700 years later. The excavation of these cities has given us unparalleled insight into Roman life.

Owing to their different locations Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried in different ways and this has affected the preservation of materials at each site. Herculaneum was a small seaside town whereas Pompeii was the industrial hub of the region. Work continues at both sites and recent excavations at Herculaneum have uncovered beautiful and fascinating artefacts. These include treasures many of which will be displayed to the public for the first time, such as finely sculpted marble reliefs, intricately carved ivory panels and fascinating objects found in one of the main drains of the city.

The exhibition will give visitors a taste of the daily life of the people of Pompeii and Herculaneum, from the bustling street to the family home. The domestic space is the essential context for people's lives, and allows us to get closer to the Romans themselves. This exhibition will explore the lives of individuals in Roman society, not the classic figures of films and television, such as emperors, gladiators and legionaries, but businessmen, powerful women, freed slaves and children. One stunning example of this material is a beautiful wall painting from Pompeii showing the baker Terentius Neo and his wife, holding writing materials showing they are literate and cultured. Importantly their pose and presentation suggests they are equal partners, in business and in life.

The emphasis on a domestic context also helps transform museum artefacts into everyday

possessions. Six pieces of wooden furniture will be lent from Herculaneum in an unprecedented loan by the Archaeological Superintendency of Naples and Pompeii. These items were carbonized by the high temperatures of the ash that engulfed the city and are extremely rare finds that would not have survived at Pompeii – showing the importance of combining evidence from the two cities. The furniture includes a linen chest, an inlaid stool and even a garden bench. Perhaps the most astonishing and moving piece is a baby's crib that still rocks on its curved runners.

The exhibition will include casts from in and around Pompeii of some of the victims of the eruption. A family of two adults and their two children are huddled together, just as in their last moments under the stairs of their villa. The most famous of the casts on display is of a dog, fixed forever at the moment of its death as the volcano submerged the cities.

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In collaboration with Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei

Notes to Editors:

Admission charge £15 plus a range of concessions. Tickets can be booked online at britishmuseum.org or 020 7323 8181. Opening hours 10.00–17.30 Saturday to Thursday and 10.00–20.30 Fridays

An accompanying publication is available from March 2013 by British Museum Press: *Life and death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, by Paul Roberts. A magnificent illustrated book offering a unique perspective on the everyday lives of the citizens of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Hardback, £45, paperback £25.

Follow updates on the exhibition via Twitter on #PompeiiExhibition and the Museum's Twitter account @britishmuseum

A full public programme accompanies the exhibition. More information is available from the press office.

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In the UK, Goldman Sachs has most recently sponsored the Tate Modern's Miro and Henry Moore exhibitions and the Royal Academy of Art's The Three Emperors exhibition.

For further information

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