

For immediate release

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كل العيون عليها! / All Eyes on Her! at the Horniman

Egyptian women take centre stage in **كل العيون عليها! / All Eyes on Her!** – a new collaborative display opening at the Horniman Museum and Gardens in south London on 4 April 2025.

From anti-colonial protestors to Olympic wrestlers, fashion designers and the creator of the world's first visibly Muslim female comic superhero, the display honours the everyday resistance of Egyptian women, reclaiming their heritage, position in public, and role in revolutions, past and present.

كل العيون عليها! / All Eyes on Her! takes its name from a popular Egyptian saying that describes the experience of feeling inspected as a woman in public. Yet, women are largely invisible in accounts of Egyptian history, both in ancient times and now.

Examining three themes – Resist, Revolt and Reclaim – and what they mean to Egyptian women, the display ranges from ancient belongings taken from Egypt during colonial times, to modern-day cultural heritage and more, including:

- a shabti revolution – ancient Egyptian shabti, used to represent the dead, are grouped to protest against their displacement, on behalf of ancient Egyptian women in the afterlife
- the outfit worn by women across faiths to protest in the 1919 anti-British colonial revolution
- contemporary designs by Egyptian fashion brand Ganubi, reimagining motifs of Egypt's diverse heritage
- personal archives and memorabilia from Mayye Zayed's award-winning documentary *Lift like a Girl!* which tells the story of working-class Egyptian women training to become Olympic weightlifters

- ancient Egyptian makeup alongside social media influencers who are adapting the signature Egyptian eyeliner style for the 21st century.

More

The display is presented bilingually in parts, with full Egyptian Arabic translations online, and with commissioned illustrations by Egyptian illustrator, Dina Zaitoun. It has been developed with Egyptian women and women-led initiatives in London, Cairo, the Egyptian Delta and Luxor, working in partnership with the Horniman since 2021.

It is also part of a three-year collaboration with researchers at UCL, through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded project 'Mobilising Collections for Institutional Change'.

Heba Abd El Gawad, Senior Curator of Anthropology at the Horniman Museum and Gardens and one of the AHRC project's research fellows, says: 'The Egypt we usually see in museums is an exotic, ancient concept. It's also an Egypt without Egyptians and one that Egyptians do not relate to. **كل العيون عليها!** / All Eyes on Her! is an attempt to challenge these stereotypes by honouring the everyday activism of Egyptian women, past and present.

'Over the past four years we have been critically reflecting with Egyptian women – from different backgrounds, ages and walks of life, both in Egypt and the UK – on how we can use the Egyptian belongings cared for at the Horniman to tell the stories that matter the most to them. This display captures the honest yet humorous conversations we had about who owns Egyptian heritage, which stories should be told in museums, and who gets to decide.

'We hope that by having a 3,000-year-old makeup container in conversation with an anticolonial protestor, a hijabi fashionista, and a street rollerblader alongside graphics inspired by Egyptian WhatsApp chat stickers, we represent an Egypt that is relevant and relatable to both the Egyptian communities and our wider audiences.'

كل العيون عليها! / All Eyes on Her! is free to visit and is open from 4 April.

Ends

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- The exhibition **title in Egyptian Arabic** is available to [download](#) in various file formats, so that it can be presented in both languages.

- **Pictured:** 1991.460 - Scarf pins wrapped in paper printed with verse by Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawki, exiled by the British for writing anticolonial poetry. Credit: Horniman Museum and Gardens.
Hi-res image available to [download](#).

Notes to Editors:

- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include a World Gallery of anthropology, music, an acclaimed aquarium, The Studio – a flexible arts and exhibition space, and a natural history gallery (closed until 2026 for redevelopment as part of [Nature + Love](#)). Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. horniman.ac.uk
- The Natural History Gallery closed for redevelopment from Monday 4 March 2024 as part of our [Nature + Love](#) project. The gallery will reopen in 2026.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** was [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](#), the world's largest museum prize.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** relies on income from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and the Café to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of our visitors and donors is hugely appreciated. horniman.ac.uk/support-us
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.
- On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman's environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman's manifesto commitments and progress so far at horniman.ac.uk/climate.