

Cats, Crocodiles and Cuneiform: X-ray Imaging in the British Museum



Speaker: Dr Daniel O'Flynn
British Museum

Date: Tuesday 4th of February at 13:00

Room: P521

For the past 100 years the British Museum has operated scientific research laboratories for the study of archaeological and historic material housed in its collection. X-ray imaging is used as a non-invasive method to answer questions on ancient traditions of manufacture and use, and to ensure the preservation of the collection for future generations. In 2017 the Museum commissioned a new X-ray imaging laboratory, located deep underneath the galleries and designed to accommodate a diverse range of material types and sizes. The lab is equipped with a high power, gantry-mounted X-ray source and has computed tomography capability.

This talk will give an overview of how X-ray imaging has been utilised in several collaborative projects between Museum scientists, curators and conservators, including uncovering cuneiform writing concealed within a 4000 year old Mesopotamian clay envelope, understanding the metalworking tradition of the 13th century Islamic world and searching for animal remains inside mummy wrappings and bronze containers from ancient Egypt.

Bio

Daniel O'Flynn is an X-ray Imaging Scientist in the British Museum's department of Scientific Research, where he has worked since 2017. His research focusses on using advances in X-ray imaging to gain insights into ancient cultures, through the manufacture and use of objects and the lives of people and fauna. He completed a PhD in Physics at the University of Warwick in 2010, working in the Superconductivity and Magnetism Group under the supervision of Prof Geetha Balakrishnan. From 2011 to 2016 Daniel worked as a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering, University College London, where he currently holds the position of Honorary Senior Research Associate.