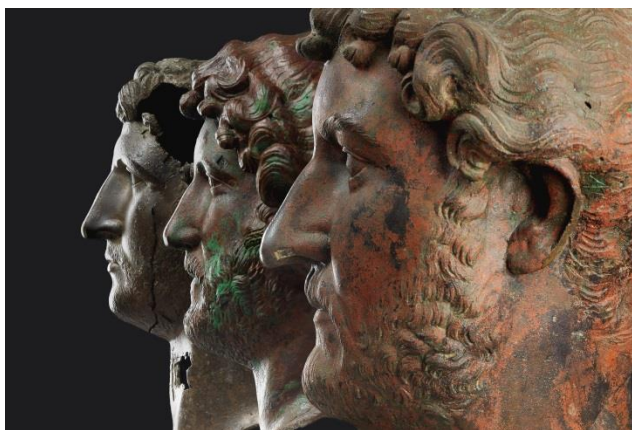




מוזיאון ישראל, ירושלים  
the israel museum, jerusalem  
متحف إسرائيل، أورشليم القدس

## Exhibition Brings Together Only Surviving 2<sup>nd</sup>-Century Bronze Portraits of the Emperor Hadrian for the First Time

Featuring Loans from the British Museum and the Louvre in Dialogue with the Israel Museum's  
Portrait Bust, this Special Display Caps the Museum's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations



*Bronze portraits of the Emperor Hadrian,  
from the British Museum (left); the Israel Museum  
(center); and the Louvre (right)*

*Photo: ©Elie Posner, Israel Museum, Jerusalem*

**Jerusalem** (December 17, 2015) – Three extant bronze portraits of Publius Aelius Hadrianus—better known as the Emperor Hadrian (117 – 138 CE), one of the boldest and most accomplished rulers of the Roman Empire—are brought together for a first-time display in the Israel Museum's Archaeology Wing, marking a symbolic return of the Emperor to Jerusalem, whose last visit to the city was in 130 CE. Opening December 22, *Hadrian: An Emperor Cast in Bronze*, concludes the Israel Museum's celebrations of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout 2015, and is among a series of special displays spotlighting masterworks from sister institutions loaned in tribute to the Museum and presented in dialogue with works from the Museum's own holdings.

Of the many bronze portraits of Hadrian that are known to have existed, only three survive. The Israel Museum's bronze, which was found in a Roman legion camp near Beth Shean in the north of Israel, depicts the emperor in military garb with beautifully preserved body armor. It is flanked by two other extraordinary examples: one from the British Museum found in 1834 in the river Thames, which may have been created to commemorate Hadrian's visit to Britain in 122 CE; the other, from the collection of the Louvre, considered to have originated in Egypt or Asia Minor. Such portraits offered an important means in their time for conveying imperial authority, with statues being erected as civic and military monuments to reinforce the breadth of the Emperor Hadrian's rule.

The return of Hadrian to Jerusalem celebrates in a way the emperor's last visit to Judea in 130 CE, contextualized through the first-time presentation of a monumental Latin dedicatory inscription erected by the 10<sup>th</sup> Roman Legion in Jerusalem in that same year. One section of the inscription was unearthed in 1903, and the other was discovered during recent excavations in 2014 by the Israel Antiquities Authority. The two parts of the inscription are joined here for the first time, on loan from The Israel Antiquities Authority and the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Museum, Jerusalem.

“As we conclude the year-long celebrations of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are especially grateful for our meaningful partnerships with the Louvre and the British Museum, whose loans serve as a powerful metaphor for the international and inter-cultural connections we have fostered throughout the Museum’s history,” said James S. Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. “The dialogue with our own Hadrian created by the adjacency of these visiting masterpieces is quite extraordinary, and we look forward—especially in the complex times in which we live today—to continuing this essential level of cultural collaboration with sister institutions internationally, illustrating the remarkable and remarkably continuous history of world culture that we preserve and share together.”

“Following our loan of Princess Hélène of Adiabène’s sarcophagus in 2011, which had never left France previously, the inclusion of the Louvre’s Hadrian bronze portrait in this display signifies the cooperation between the Musée du Louvre and the Israel Museum and demonstrates the desire to develop even stronger ties,” said Jean-Luc Martinez, President and Director of the Musée du Louvre.

Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum said, “When the British Museum mounted its exhibition, *Hadrian: Empire and Conflict* in 2008, the Israel Museum made outstandingly generous loans to the exhibition, which was seen by over a quarter of a million visitors. It is a great pleasure to be able to reciprocate that generosity and to celebrate the Israel Museum’s 50th Anniversary by lending this great sculpture to Jerusalem.”

Like his predecessors, Emperor Hadrian was immortalized in bronze and marble statues. These statues, which were sent throughout Rome’s provinces as a demonstration of Rome’s imperial power, possessed political as well as cultic significance, and some were venerated as the embodiment of the divine Caesar.

These three images are seemingly alike, yet each possesses a unique set of characteristics which highlight the multifaceted and contradictory character of Hadrian, known not only as an astute general and politician, but also as a benevolent ruler who was well-versed in disciplines such as architecture, geometry, literature, poetry, and philosophy. The display of the three portraits also stimulates a discussion of two diametrically opposed views of Hadrian’s rule: the accepted view of Hadrian as a scholarly peacemaker and protector who built the iconic wall across northern Britain, and the contrary perception in his own time of Hadrian as “the bone grinder,” the destroyer of Judea.

*Hadrian: An Emperor Cast in Bronze* is on display through June 30, 2016. The exhibition is curated by David Mevorach, Senior Curator of Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Archaeology, and Rachel Caine-Kreinin, Associate Curator, together with Thorsten Opper, Senior Curator, Department of Greece and Rome, The British Museum.

### **About The Israel Museum, Jerusalem**

The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in the State of Israel and is ranked among the leading art and archaeology museums in the world. Founded in 1965, the Museum houses encyclopedic collections ranging from prehistory through contemporary art and includes the most extensive holdings of Biblical and Holy Land archaeology in the world, among them the Dead Sea Scrolls. Over its first 50 years, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of nearly 500,000 objects through an unparalleled legacy of gifts and support from its circle of patrons worldwide.

The Museum's 20-acre campus, which underwent a comprehensive renewal in 2010 designed by James Carpenter Design Associates and Efrat-Kowalsky Architects, features the Billy Rose Art Garden, the Shrine of the Book, and more than 225,000 square feet of collection and temporary exhibition galleries. The Museum also organizes programming at its off-site locations in Jerusalem at the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, where it presents archaeological artifacts from the ancient Land of Israel; and at its historic Ticho House, a venue for exhibitions of contemporary Israeli art.

The Museum is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout 2015, with a year-long program devoted to an exploration of Israel's aesthetic culture in the 50 years before and after its founding.

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