

NEWS RELEASE

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With Help from the Public during COVID-19, Penn Museum Displays an Artifact to Represent “Love”

PHILADELPHIA —The Penn Museum has unveiled the first artifact chosen by the public for the *Community Spotlight*. There are one million objects in the Penn Museum, but in the **Spotlight Gallery**, an intimate 360-degree space adjacent to the Sphinx, there can only be one.

The Museum launched the online community engagement project in mid-March.

First, the public selected a universal theme that connects everyone around the world: love. Second, curators, exhibitions experts, and collections staff at the Penn Museum carefully selected six objects ranging from 664 BCE-1995 CE related to the theme. Third, it was time for the public to vote again: this time, it was to determine which artifact most accurately represented “love.”



The object with the most votes was a bronze statuette of Isis, an Egyptian goddess, nursing her son, Horus, on her lap. It is now on display in the **Spotlight Gallery**.

Dr. Jennifer Houser Wegner, the Associate Curator of the Egyptian Section at the Penn Museum, immediately recognized this piece, created between 664-332 BCE, as an ideal candidate for the *Community Spotlight*.

“As a mother, I can identify with the fierce protection that Isis had for her son,” Dr. Houser Wegner explains. “This is especially impactful right now, as my son has entered his final year of high school and nears the threshold of ‘adulthood,’ but he’ll always be my baby.”

Other objects that were candidates for the *Community Spotlight* included a:

- wooden block from China that was used to print the first pages of a Christian text, *The Doctrine of the True God’s Love for the World 真神愛世論* (1840 CE)
- Blolo Bla from western Africa, where it was believed that all people were married in the spirit world before birth (1875-1900 CE)

- Pueblo wedding vase symbolizing the coming together of two people to nurture each other, bringing and sustaining life (1995 CE)
- basalt caving of an Inuit mother carrying a young child nestled inside her parka (1985 CE), and
- fragment of a terra cotta figurine found in Nippur (present-day Iraq) that illustrates a couple's meaningful embrace (circa 300 BCE-200 CE).

Access to the Community Spotlight is included with general admission.

For more information about the bronze statuette selected by the public, [click here](#).

Open to the public Tuesdays through Sundays from 10:00 am—5:00 pm, the Penn Museum offers timed tickets online to ensure a calm, crowd-free experience. As a part of its safety protocols, facial coverings are required. One-way directional routes maximize social distancing inside the galleries and gardens, plus guests are still able to explore more using touch-free digital interactives with the help of an individual-use stylus. Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the building. Plan your visit [here](#).

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About the Penn Museum

Since 1887, the Museum has been transforming our understanding of the human experience. Dedicated to building connections between cultures, the Museum welcomes everyone to uncover the past, gain an understanding of our shared humanity, and find one's own place in the arc of human history. For more information, follow [@PennMuseum](#) on social media, visit www.penn.museum, or call 215.898.4000.