

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

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GE PRESENTS: THE MYSTERY OF THE ALBANY MUMMIES AT THE ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND ART

ALBANY, N.Y. (SEPTEMBER 20, 2013) GE Presents: The Mystery of the Albany Mummies opens tomorrow and will remain on view through June 8, 2014.

The Ancient Egypt Collection is the most popular exhibit in the Institute's portfolio, drawing tens of thousands of visitors annually. Tomorrow marks the opening of the largest exhibition of this kind in the Institute's history. In addition to greatly expanded displays, the exhibition also includes educational programs, an international lecture series, festivals and hands-on workshops for children and families.

The Centerpiece

The centerpiece of the exhibition is the reunification of the 21st Dynasty mummy, Ankhefenmut, with all parts of his coffin and the role new scholarship and technology has played in this still unfolding and exciting story. The exhibition will reunite the three coffin parts for the first time in more than 100 years, since being sold to the three museums on two continents. Dr. Peter Lacovara, Senior Curator of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern Art at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, in Atlanta, serves as guest curator. The exhibition features more than 200 objects, with 140 major loans, including loans from: the British Museum, London; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology; the Semitic Museum, Harvard University; the Brooklyn Museum; the American Museum of Natural History; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University; the University of Pennsylvania; Williams College Museum of Art; the Redwood Library in Newport, Rhode Island; Olana State Historic Site; New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Albany Masonic Hall Association; and many private collections.

The exhibition is divided into four major themes:

"From the Nile to the Hudson" recounts the story of the Albany Institute's acquisition of the two mummies and coffins from the Cairo Museum in 1909 by Samuel Brown. This section includes the discovery of the priest's cache at Deir el-Bahri, the purchase of the mummies and coffins, and the story of how the mummies

and coffins were dispersed throughout the world.

“Egyptomania” highlights the archaeological discoveries in Egypt and the revival of ancient Egyptian art and design. This section helps set the stage for the Albany Institute’s acquisition of the mummies. Napoleon’s Description of Egypt, Giovanni Belzoni’s Egyptian narrative with hand-colored lithographs, and Jean-François Champollion’s account of the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone, along with a selection of Egyptian Revival art and decorative arts, are featured.

“Ankhefenmut and His World” showcases the beautifully decorated coffin of Ankhefenmut, re-united in this exhibition with its lid and mummy board. This section focuses on Ankhefenmut’s life as a priest in the Temple of Mut and his profession as a sculptor. Non-invasive CT scans and x-rays reveal new information about this mummy’s age, profession, and sex.

“Preparing for the Afterlife” explores mummification practices and the ritual preparation and burial practices in Egypt over thousands of years. This section features the museum’s Ptolemaic Period (305-30 BC) mummy, new x-ray and CT scan images, and an interactive mummification station. Also here are a selection of animal mummies and funerary objects.

Education Programs

The museum has organized more than nine months of exciting programming for all ages. Lectures by world renowned archaeologists, curators, and scholars will discuss aspects of Egyptian life, art, funerary practices, animal mummies, Egyptomania, and recent scientific revelations about the Albany Mummies. Family programs include art making lessons for children and special weekend celebrations highlighting Egyptian pottery, clothing, jewelry, food, games, music, storytelling, and gods and goddesses. Three specially designed interactive stations include “How to Make a Mummy,” with a life-size, soft-sculpture mummy, a hieroglyphs station where visitors can view a replica of the Rosetta Stone and write their own name or secret messages to friends, and a large replica of a chair found in the tomb of King Tutankhamen where visitors can sit and be photographed as a king.

Documentary Film

The Albany Mummies: Unraveling an Ancient Mystery highlights the journey of the mummies from the 21st Dynasty to the 21st century with a focus on the intersection of science, technology, and the humanities. Watch as specialists review the new x-rays and CT scans obtained at Albany Medical Center in March of 2012 and reveal the startling news--it’s a boy! The film, written, directed, and produced by Professors Mary Valentis and William Rainbolt of the University at Albany, is a collaborative effort between the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany Medical Center, University at Albany Foundation, and the University at Albany College of Arts & Sciences and Center for Humanities, Arts, and TechnoSciences.

Book

The Albany Institute and SUNY Press will co-publish a fully illustrated book recounting the story of the Albany Mummies, including all of the new scholarship and a complete listing of the museum's collections. Essays include: "The Albany Mummies: From the Nile to the Hudson," by Tammis K. Groft, AIHA Executive Director and Chief Curator; "Ankhefenmut and His World," by Dr. Peter Lacovara, will discuss the life and times of Ankhefenmut, a priest and sculptor in the Temple of Mut during the 21st dynasty; "Who Was Ankhefenmut?" by Joyce Haynes, will translate the hieroglyphs on Ankhefenmut's coffin in order to piece together his genealogy and paleography to better understand his life and work; "Preparing for the Afterlife," by Dr. Peter Lacovara, will highlight the ritual preparation and burial practices related to the museum's mummies; "The Albany Mummies: A Scientific Investigation," including new CT Scans, x-rays, and 3-D reconstructions, by Dr. Bob Brier; "Egyptomania and the Empire State," by Dr. Peter Lacovara, discusses the revival of Ancient Egyptian art and culture; "The Conservation of Ankhefenmut's Coffin," by Leslie Ransik Gat will discuss the conservation of the 21st Dynasty coffin bottom.

With Special Thanks

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