

**Those who never made it to the display case:  
Egyptian Social Media Representations of  
Ancient Egypt**

Heba Abd el Gawad, The British Museum /  
Helwan University / Durham University



The replica Pharaoh on Egypt's invincible truck as tweeted in the wake of Egypt's bid for UNESCO competition. The tweet states: heading to UNESCO, driver?

Al-khatib, T. [taqadam]. (2017, Oct 11). [يونسكو يا أسطي](https://t.co/RSD27j0i8Y) [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/taqadam/status/918151896472457216>

Drawing on a qualitative content analysis this paper makes the case of the use of social media within Egypt as a people-centred participatory display space of ancient Egypt. It casts light on how-although unacknowledged. Egyptians are actively curating uncensored online interpretations reconnecting their past with their present daily concerns.

These viral representations acknowledge and foreground the multivocality and diversity of modern Egyptian perceptions and uses of Egypt's past and its material culture. Unlike the state and the expert conservative hyper-real narratives, tweeted ancient Egypt confronts the difficult present of Egyptian identity crisis, rural-urban divide, socio-economic defeat, national self-reflection, and state accountability.

*Poster*

**"Here I am": the treatment and display of The  
British Museum shabti collection from 1753 to  
today**

Kelly Accetta, The British Museum



British Museum shabtis on wooden mounts with labels

The earliest shabtis acquired by The British Museum come from the founding collection of Sir Hans Sloane, bequeathed in 1753. Ever since, the growing collection has been curated and displayed in various groupings, themes, and galleries. Today, the more than 3000 shabtis reveal the evolution of design in the displaying of Egypt: affixed wooden bases bearing information for the viewer, the addition of modern pieces to 'restore' the shape, the joining of fragments (not always from the same shabti), amongst other modern interventions. This process of preparation for public consumption exposes changing attitudes towards the treatment and care of 'artefacts', especially those as ubiquitous as the shabti.

## Displaying Egyptian History in the Egyptian regional museums, Challenges and future trends

Shreen Amin, Egyptian Museum, Cairo



The Suez Museum

Regional Museums in Egypt are varied; they present Egyptian history through different ways of displaying collections, while visitors are primarily local. These museums cover local history and their collections normally include objects with a local connection – connecting visitors somehow to a time, a place, or a phenomenon presented by artifacts inside. They have much potential as heritage tourist attractions and potential cultural resources. These Museums are trying to shape perceptions and conceptions of Egyptian history and culture for different audiences.

The objective of this paper is to clarify the current displays in regional museums in the northern of Egypt and how these museums act as vital tools in preserving Egyptian tradition. The paper analyses their missions, their civic and social responsibilities, and their methods of engagement with communities through different methods of display.

## The Contemporary Display of Ancient Egypt in the old Public Museum:

### Rethinking New Walk's Ancient Egypt Gallery

Stephanie Boonstra, University of Birmingham,  
New Walk Museum, Leicester



New Walk's current Ancient Egypt gallery, prior to redisplay.

Over twenty years after the Ancient Egypt gallery opened at New Walk Museum in Leicester, the Egyptology collection is now undergoing a significant re-imagining for redisplay. Encompassing new visuals, exhibition strategies, and interpretations of a larger proportion of the Egyptology collection than has ever been displayed, this project will create a more historically accurate, culturally sympathetic, and re-invigorated display of this fascinating collection. By incorporating the stories of local historical figures, such as Thomas Cook and Noel Spurway, alongside the voices of Egyptians living in Leicester today, the new galleries aim to inclusively appeal to the diversity of such a vibrant multicultural city.

## From Political Narrative to Museum Policy: Displaying Mamluk Cairo at the V&A

Moya Carey, V&A, London  
& Mercedes Volait, InVisu (INHA), Paris



The art collection of Gaston de Saint Maurice, as displayed at the Paris Exhibition of 1878, within a chronological sequence of displays coordinated by the Egyptian government

This paper examines how a private art collection was assembled in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cairo, displayed in Paris, and then purchased whole by the South Kensington Museum (today the V&A) in London. The collector was Gaston de Saint Maurice, a French employee of Khedive Ismail: he furnished his Cairo home with artwork, architectural salvage and plastercasts from Mamluk monuments. On the Khedive's orders, he sent these to Paris in 1878, creating a substantial display entitled "L'Egypte des Khalifes", within a longer chronological sequence of galleries promoting modern Egypt's political identity. Purchased in 1884 for the V&A, this Cairo collection would be (re-) displayed according to different phases of institutional narrative at this influential design museum.

## The British Museum in Miniature: Joseph Mayer's Egyptian Museum

Ashley Cooke, National Museums Liverpool

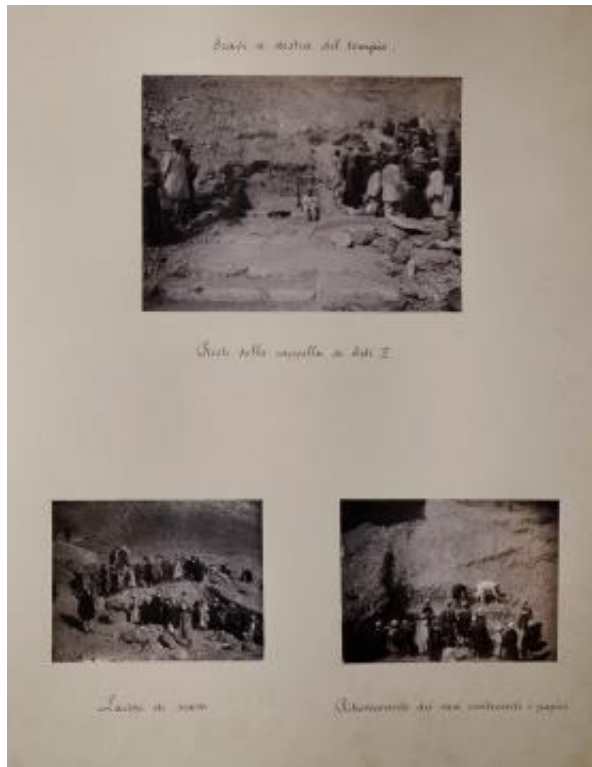


The mummy Room in Joseph Mayer's Egyptian Museum

Liverpool goldsmith and major Victorian antiquary Joseph Mayer FSA opened the 'Egyptian Museum' in 1852. The Georgian terrace house was filled from top to bottom with Mayer's antiquities, with the aim of creating a place for those with no opportunity of visiting the British Museum. The six galleries made associations between objects and historically significant people - a characteristic of the cabinet of curiosity. The notorious forger of texts Constantine Simonides took advantage of this display feature by creating for Mayer a range of papyri containing wonderfully early Christian scripture. In 1867 the museum closed and Mayer's collection moved to Liverpool Free Public Museum (now World Museum) where it was broken up with the assistance of Samuel Birch for a new display setting with different aims.

## Displaying context at the *Museo Egizio* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Paolo Del Vesco, Museo Egizio, Turin



A page from the photographic album "Excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Deir el-Medina, 1904-1906" that was accessible to the visitors in the Turin museum galleries in 1908

Curators of Egyptian collections typically favoured displays of antiquities arranged according to typological/thematic or chronological criteria, while the archaeological context and landscape, although sometimes recreated in international expositions and fairs, almost invariably failed to find a place in museums. Even to the mass of objects flowing, since the 1880s, from controlled excavations into European collections contextual data offered little more than a mark of authenticity. Within this general trend, the *Museo Egizio* and a few other venues stood as an exception. Drawing on archive documents and photography, newspapers and guidebooks, the paper will discuss some of these context-oriented displays, arguing that they expressed a growing concern with addressing a wider non-specialist audience.

## The Museum and the Monolith

Chris Elliott, University of Southampton



The British Museum and Cleopatra's Needle?

Among the many proposed sites for Cleopatra's Needle, an object variously seen as antiquity, architectural element, curiosity, biblical witness, and imperial trophy, were both the forecourt of the British Museum and its Egyptian galleries. Examining the Museum's role in its acquisition and conservation, and the competing claims of other institutions and sites for the monolith therefore raises issues involving the spaces used to display antiquities, the nature of public engagement with them, object acquisition and cultural property, the role of professional groups and the general public, the nature of museum items and their display, and the conservation of cultural heritage.



## Exhibiting Modern Egypt: From Expos to the Museum

Mohamed Elshahed, Cairoobserver



Egyptian pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York combined modernist architecture with displays of ancient sculpture.

The catalogue entry for Egypt's participation in the Great Exhibition of 1851 lists the displayed objects. They include pipes, textiles, stone samples from the country's quarries, craft goods, samples of fauna, tools as well as some industrial goods. The curated list of objects was meant to present Egypt on the international stage as an ancient, traditional yet modernizing country full of resources. Since that first exhibition Egypt put on numerous displays at international expositions as well as domestically, all staged to focus on the country's modernization, production and industrialization. In international expos ancient artifacts were key aspects of the display, often positioned near the entrance or in a dedicated room with museum-like displays.

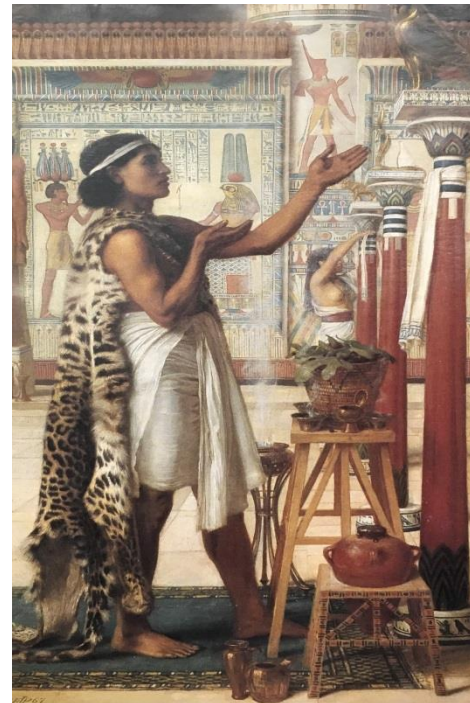
In the twentieth century Egypt's staged displays underwent a sort of rebranding aiming to forcibly position the country as modern and progressive both to international and Egyptian audiences. The displays carefully integrated architecture, display design and the selection of objects and industries represented. In this paper, exhibitions held in Cairo in 1926, 1936, 1949 and 1958 are discussed in terms of their architectures and the construction of images that put into sharp relief the state's positioning of the materiality of modernity in the Egyptian context.

Egypt's participation in the 1939 and 1964 New York World's Fairs as well as the 1958 Brussels World's Fair are also discussed. This history of displaying Egypt by the Egyptian state forms an important historical precedent to the Modern Egypt Project at the British Museum. What lessons can be learned from this history, what are the

strategies of exhibition employed and how can this history inform museum displays in Egypt and internationally focused on the country's modernity and its material culture?

## Edward John Poynter: New Visions on Egypt 1860–70

Donato Esposito



Edward John Poynter, *Adoration to Ra*, 1867. Oil on canvas, 73 x 42 cm (Private Collection)

Edward John Poynter (1836–1919) was one of the most innovative artists to engage with the material culture of ancient Egypt, especially that on display at the British Museum. Throughout the 1860s he lived close to the Museum, firstly in Fitzrovia and then at 62 Great Russell Street from 1865–69. He turned to ordinary daily life and freed subjects from biblical narratives. His *Adoration to Ra* (1867; Private Collection) was admired by the *Illustrated London News* as a model of "patient archaeological research". Poynter's brightly polychromed reconstructions also activated debates about the role of colour in ancient Egyptian art.

## Displaying Egypt: special exhibitions at the British Museum

Stuart Frost, British Museum



*Egypt: faith after the pharaohs*  
(29 October 2015 – 7 February 2016)



*Ancient lives: new discoveries*  
(22 May 2014 – 12 July 2015)

This paper focuses on recent special exhibitions at the British Museum about ancient Egypt:

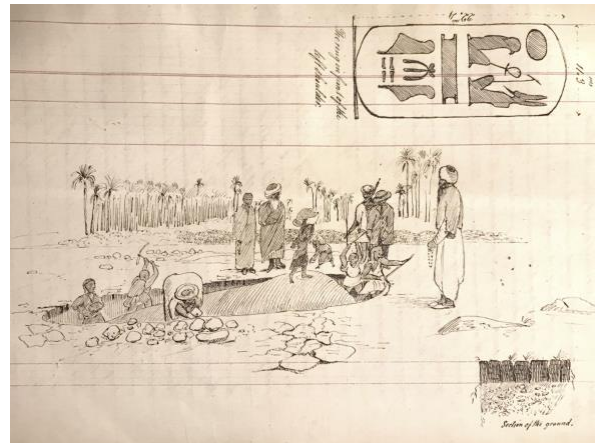
- *Book of the Dead: journey to the afterlife;*
- *Egypt: faith after the pharaohs;*
- *Ancient Lives, New Discoveries;*
- *Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds.*

Innovation in interpretation and display at the Museum has largely taken place in special exhibitions rather than permanent galleries. This paper draws selectively on extensive visitor research to focus on the audience:

- Who visits the Museum's 'Egyptian' exhibitions and why?
- What do they know about Egypt and what is the impact of their exhibition visit?
- What can be learned from exhibitions to create more effective permanent displays?

## Stored and forgotten? 19th century objects from Memphis and Heliopolis

Meira Gold, University of Cambridge



'Sketch of Joseph Hekekyan directing excavations in Mit Rahina (Memphis) around the fallen statue of Ramses II, 1852

In mid-Victorian Egyptology, scholars in London routinely relied on collectors, informants, and locals in the field to communicate archaeological information about the nature and provenance of objects. This talk considers the treatment of one collection of antiquities, specimens, and papers from 1850s Memphis and Heliopolis that were acquired by the British Museum under such circumstances. These objects never went on display, but were sent to storage and largely forgotten, along with the significance of the excavation that produced them. I'll discuss how relevant field-based knowledge was mobilised through long-distance networks and paper records, how conflicting disciplinary questions and concerns with trust, expertise, and locality dictated which objects had Egyptological value, and lastly, how these judgements shaped subsequent research and histories of Egyptology.

## About Golden Treasures and Pyramids: Ancient Egypt in the mind of contemporary Egyptians

Fatma Keshk, Freie Universität Berlin



Engaging general audience with their ancient Egyptian heritage through basics of Hieratic writing, Qena, Egypt, November 2016

Perspectives of ancient Egypt among contemporary Egyptians are as wide and varied as its long overwhelming history. These perceptions were shaped and in many cases also fixed through long ages of the modern times. They were shaped by displays of artefacts in Egyptian museums, historical publications made for general audiences and by the transferred narratives of exploring Egyptian antiquities since the 19th century. In the second half of the 20th century and since then, these views are also being shaped by fiction movies, literature and visual arts featuring ancient Egyptian inspirations. From a strong interest in the topic and in the light of the conference themes, this paper aims to present a review of the actual perceptions of ancient Egyptian heritage among various groups of audiences in contemporary Egypt. This review represents the initial results of an ongoing research started by the author since April 2016 on heritage knowledge in Egypt. This research aims to assess the various levels of knowledge of ancient heritage amongst today's Egyptians.

This research is based on several resources such as interviews with some of the visitors at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo in 2012 and a review of ancient Egyptian history in the governmental educational curricula in 2011-2012. A main resource for the research data is also the experience gained from heritage outreach workshops started since 2007 with the local communities in the surroundings of archaeological sites across Egypt (South Sinai, Aswan, Western Delta, Eastern Delta, Middle Egypt and in Nubia).

## 'Valuable Specimens' and 'Mere Fragments': Changing Perceptions of Value in Ancient Egyptian Collections and Displays at National Museums Scotland

Margaret Maitland and Dan Potter, National Museums Scotland



*The Tomb: Ancient Egyptian Burial*, which reunited a Theban tomb group excavated by A.H. Rhind in 1857, on display at the National Museum of Scotland (31 March –3 September 2017)

Fortunes of museum objects can change dramatically over time, from dusty unpacked crates to priceless treasures. Shifting institutional and curatorial aims shape how objects are valued and displayed. This paper examines National Museums Scotland's history within wider trends. In 1859, A.H. Rhind was the first to include archaeological plans in displays. Loss of his expertise devalued the collection. Later, the Museum sent curator Edwin Ward to excavate with Petrie, seeking 'more intimate' contact with archaeological processes. Aesthetic emphasis brought extensive deaccessioning under Cyril Aldred, and educational focus, in which he designed dioramas and replicas. How will future trends shape NMS collections and displays?





*The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology*

**The most ordinary of things: Victorian artists and the allure of the ancient Egyptian collections at the British Museum**

Stephanie Moser, University of Southampton

When the British Museum opened its first 'Mummy Room' in 1837, visitors flocked to the new gallery to inspect the impressive collection of mummies and smaller antiquities more recently acquired by the Museum. Extended to two galleries soon after, the mummy rooms remained enormously popular with museum audiences throughout the nineteenth century and still do to this day.

Amongst the many visitors who were captivated by the diverse range of domestic items on display in these rooms were a number of prominent Victorian artists, including Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Sir Edward Poynter and Edwin Long. All were drawn to the humbler utilitarian objects that had survived the ravages of time, celebrating these most ordinary of things in a substantive number of Egyptian themed paintings. The highlight of their pictures, in which the 'manners and customs' of the ancient Egyptians were the focus, was the emphasis on meticulously rendered household objects, many of which were copied from artefacts in the Museum. For these artists, the everyday items from Egyptian antiquity had a strong appeal because of their sheer 'ordinariness' and the way in which they had been so beautifully decorated by ancient artisans. With their paintings, Alma-Tadema, Poynter and Long drew attention to the material world of the ancient Egyptians, creating a highly evocative sense of the private lives of these ancestors.

This talk presents the results of a major research project on the intensive engagement that Victorian artists had with the Egyptian antiquities at the British Museum. It will be argued that while artists like Alma-Tadema, Poynter and Long enlisted the collections as a means of adding interest and veracity to their visual explorations of the past, their paintings also played a highly significant role in defining the 'lifestyle' of the ancient Egyptians.

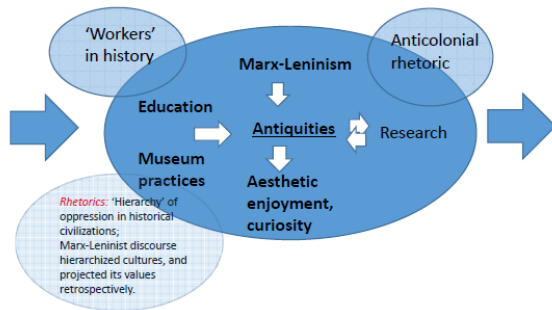
Image: Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Pastimes in Ancient Egypt 3,000 years ago*, 1863. Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, UK.



Poster

## Displaying Egypt behind the Iron Curtain: Czechoslovakia 1949-1989

Hana Navratilova (University of Reading) and  
Radek Podhorný



Totalitarian regimes demonstrate a significant propensity for manipulation of history as an identity resource. Historical sciences, considered easier to ideologize, consequently developed diverse strategies of survival. Egyptology in Czechoslovakia from 1949 to 1989 was a case in point, using temporary museum displays as part of public communication. The presentations comprised elements of political discourse as well as diverse approaches to displaying a restricted number of artefacts. Access to artefacts was shaped by collecting; acquisition history was determined by limited fieldwork in Egypt. Developing fieldwork access coincided with the decolonisation processes in Egypt, resulting in a specific professional development and strategy.

## A very British Adventure: Archives, Diplomacy, and Nostalgia in the 1972 *Treasures of Tutankhamun* Exhibition

Christina Riggs, UEA, Norwich

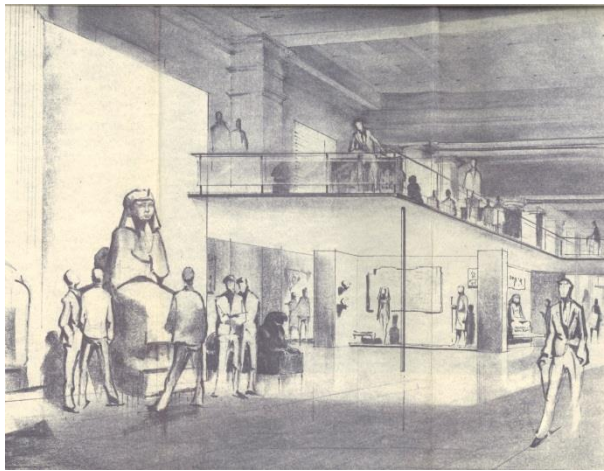


Queen Elizabeth II visiting the 'Treasures of Tutankhamun' exhibition at the British Museum, 1972. BM archives.

Often remembered as the first 'blockbuster' exhibition, for the entrance queues that formed around the British Museum each day of its long run, the 'Treasures of Tutankhamun' exhibition took several years for the British Museum to secure. It was eventually timed with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb, with financial support (and managerial involvement) from London *Times* facilitating the British Museum's access to that newspaper's own archives of exclusive photographs and press coverage from the 1920s excavation. The Museum also made extensive use of the Carter archive at the Griffith Institute, Oxford University, including further photographs by Harry Burton. In this paper, I explore the reactivation of these archives for the 1972 exhibition, and in particular the use of *Times* and Burton photographs, some of which were incorporated into the display. I am interested in how those visual evocations of the past, as well as the involvement of individuals and institutions linked to the original discovery, helped create a sense of 'imperial nostalgia' (Rosaldo 1989, among others), which arguable was crucial to the exhibition's spectacular success with British audiences in particular. For all that the Egyptian government and its antiquities officials were central to the project, and had their own aims and interests in mind, the exhibition presented a very British Tutankhamun – and served British diplomatic efforts to repair post-Suez relations between the two countries.

## Modern design, imposing architecture and archaeological context: 20<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian displays at the British Museum

Neal Spencer, British Museum

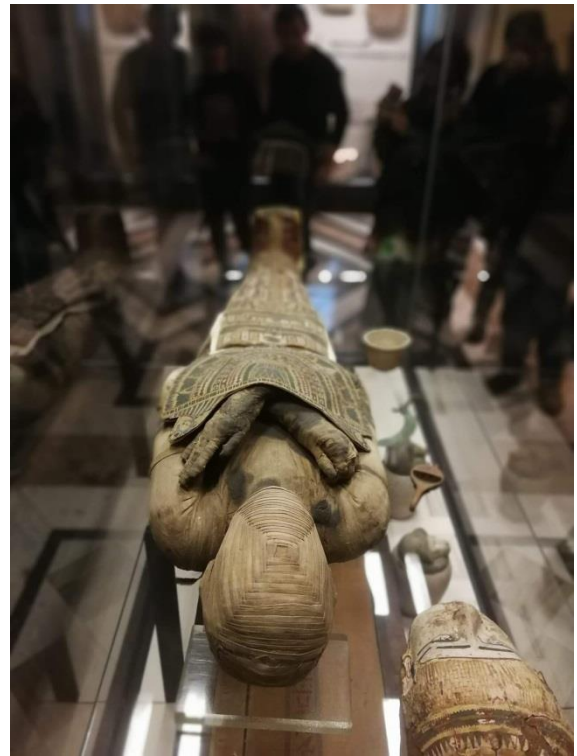


Unrealised design for a redisplay of the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery at the British Museum (1966). AES archives.

The permanent displays – some largely unchanged over 40 years – of ancient Egypt at the British Museum in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (especially before the refurbishments of 1991 onwards) have been interpreted as taxonomic in structure. Archival sources will be used to highlight changing priorities amongst the Museum's curators, reflecting shifts in scholarly discourse, throughout this period. Context and provenance were of increasing importance and interest, but this was not always reflected in the physical layout of the Egyptian displays. The tension between modernity, historic architecture and interiors of the British Museum, alongside a desire for more contextual experiences for visitors, will be explored, through case studies of the the lower and upper floor displays of ancient Egypt.

## The Controversial Mummy

Angela Stienne, University of Leicester



Mummy of a man (Pacheri?) at the Musée du Louvre, Paris

At its reopening in 2015, the Musée de l'Homme in Paris kept its 33 Egyptian mummies off display, 'for reasons of conservation and ethics' – and yet, a child mummy *is* on display.

Long considered familiar and unproblematic, the mummy has gradually become a subject of museum debates, exemplified by removals of specimens from display. Museums have chiefly addressed their histories – not the object biographies, but rather the cultural contexts in which mummies were collected and studied. This paper argues that the 21st century museum must be an avenue to expose these complex histories; these cannot be expressed through removal from display.

**Ghosts, Orphans and the Dispossessed:  
Decluttering displays 1945–1965**

Alice Stevenson, Institute of Archaeology,  
University College London



*The National Museum of Ghana, Accra*

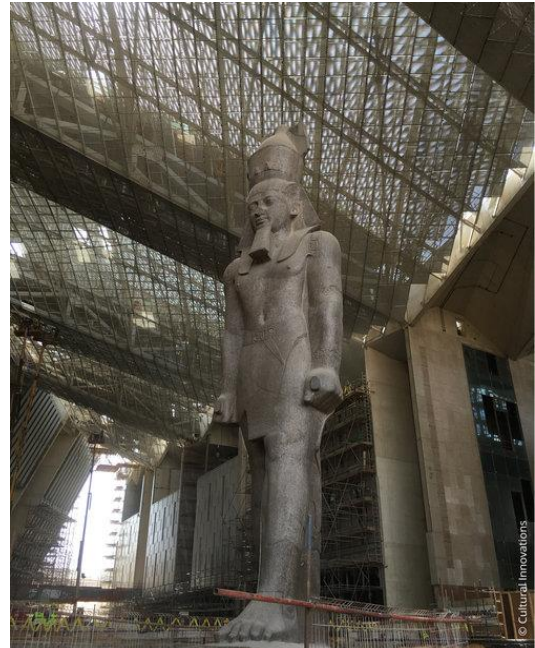
For much of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Egyptian archaeology displays were typified by dense, cluttered arrays of artefacts. By the 1950s exhibits were far sparser. Beyond glass vitrines museum collections were equally being pared down and, in many instances, being disposed of. This paper examines the wider shifts that impacted display strategies in post war era UK and USA, including the physical devastation wrought by the War, the fragmentation of Empire, changes in interior design, and the 1950s 'future boom'. As a counter point, this paper also looks toward other parts of the world, such as Ghana, where exhibits absorbed Egyptian artefacts disposed of from museums elsewhere to enable narratives of decolonization.

*Keynote closing lecture*

**The Grand Egyptian Museum**

**Moving from Object to Context oriented  
Display**

Tarek Tawfik, Grand Egyptian Museum



Ramses II statue in Grand Egyptian Museum, Cairo.  
<https://www.culturalinnovations.com/grand-egyptian-museum>

The Grand Egyptian Museum once completely opened will have 50,000 artifacts on permanent display, traveling with the visitor through time from prehistory until the Greek & Roman periods in Egypt. The big challenge, and at the same time the great opportunity, is that about 30,000 of the exhibits have never been on display before. Known highlights are star collections like Tutankhamun and Hetepheres. These collections are not on display for the first time, so what is new? Innovative display concepts and scenarios move the Grand Egyptian Museum away from traditional Object-oriented display to an exciting Context-oriented display.



## Displaying digital: Egyptian mummies at the British Museum

Marie Vandenbeusch and Daniel Antoine,  
British Museum



'Mummy from Gebelein and visualisation as displayed in the exhibition *Ancient lives: new discoveries* (22 May 2014 – 12 July 2015)

Over the last decades, museums have firmly embraced the use of digital technologies, enhancing visitors' experiences through the development of websites, mobile apps, audio guides and/or (interactive) screen installations. The search for innovative ways to present the collection and associated research varies by institution. Here, we will follow the evolution of technologies used to research the mummies curated at the British Museum and how the results are being shared with new audiences. We will explore the use of innovative digital displays to present the latest CT scan research.

## 200 years of Saqqara in Leiden

Lara Weiss, National Museum of Antiquities in  
Leiden



Early 20<sup>th</sup> century display, Leiden

In 2018 the RMO celebrates 200-year anniversary, an excellent opportunity to pause and consider the past. Leiden's Egyptian collection gradually evolved through acquisition and donations, but not – until the 1950s – through the sharing of finds from excavations. In the 1970s the museum and the EES endeavoured to find the Tomb of Maya. We now have the quite unique situation that modern excavations allow to reconstruct the lost contexts of objects acquired about 2 centuries ago. My lecture will reflect on how 'Saqqara' was exhibited in Leiden over time, explore how the excavations impacted on the museum display and vice versa.

## Experimental Spaces: Displaying Egypt at the Annual Exhibitions in London, 1884-1939

Alice Williams, University of Oxford / Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL

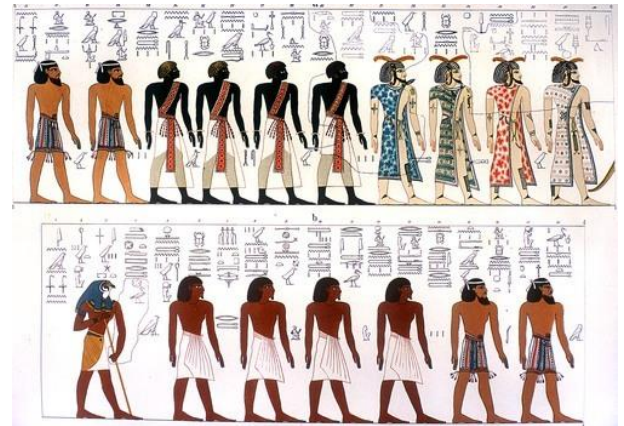


The British School of Archaeology in Egypt's temporary exhibition of finds from Hawara, 1911. Courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL.

Between 1884 and 1939 the Egypt Exploration Fund (Society) and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt held a series of annual exhibitions in varying locations across London to showcase the results of each archaeological season. Presenting the new science of archaeological practice, these annual gatherings of people, objects, and ideas created a unique environment for 'knowing' ancient and contemporary Egypt in the imperial metropole. This paper will demonstrate how the temporary and transitional nature of these exhibitions, outside the distinctive setting of the museum, enabled a far more experimental and reactive space to explore new narratives and display techniques.

## The Body Beautiful: Race and the ancient Egyptians

Sonia Zakrzewski, University of Southampton



"The Egyptians were an ancient race of Caucasians residing in one of the northern sections of Africa." So said Holden Caulfield, in J.D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. The issue of race is much discussed in relation to the ancient Egyptians, but how have such perceptions affected the collection and display of Egyptian human remains? Race and ethnic affiliation may be subverted for political or other purposes and has affected the museum visitor's mental construct of an ancient Egyptian. Modern biological anthropology, using analyses of skeletal diversity and ancient DNA, demonstrates the problematic nature of race, but discussions have rarely been synthesised with the associated funerary archaeology in modern museum displays.

Poster

**Playing around with a few of your favourite things – forgotten Egyptian objects, lost provenance and the Museum of Lies**

Katharina Zinn



This poster presents the processes involving the literal and cultural re-discovery of ancient Egyptian artefacts in Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Merthyr Tydfil, Wales as a joint-venture with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David led by the author. The project aims to bring these mainly un-provenanced objects back to life by creating different simultaneous types of cultural representations via academic outputs, exhibitions, story-telling, art projects with local artists and school children as well as a *Museum of Lies* collecting fictional stories inspired by the items.

The lead is taken by the objects themselves which enchant not only Egyptologists but equally audiences of the community museum and students. We address the questions:

- How have distinctive settings – national, local, institutional – shaped displays of Egypt? For what aims were such displays created?
- How have displays of artefacts and human remains shaped perceptions and conceptions of Egyptian history and culture for different audiences?
- How has the non-display/storage of certain artefacts influenced research on, and perceptions of, Egypt?