



Ministry of Antiquities

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MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART REOPENING

The Egyptian President reopened the Museum of Islamic Art, after a rehabilitation project to repair the museum's façade and restore its collections, destroyed in a terrorist attack on 24 January, 2014. The inauguration was attended by Egyptian Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, Minister of International Cooperation, governor of Cairo, ambassadors of countries that have participated in the rehabilitation and UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Natural Science (18 January, 2017). A special event followed the inauguration, with a live performance by the Egyptian Mevlevi troupe, in the museum's garden. It was attended by ambassadors, cultural attachés, members of foreign institutions, university professionals, and MoA staff (19 January, 2017). The museum was opened to the public for free for a week (20 – 28 January, 2017).

As a result of the 2014 attack, 179 objects were destroyed of the 1475 items on display. One-hundred-and-sixty of those have been restored since then. The new display includes 4400 items of which 400 are being displayed for the first time. Three new galleries and sixteen new showcases were also added. Two catalogues were published, one for adults in Arabic and English, and another especially for children. A mobile application was also launched.

Inaugurated in 1902, the MIA is the oldest museum in the world for Islamic art, and remains the largest collection of Islamic art.

The restoration of the MIA's façade and collections was made possible with the support of the United Arab Emirates, USAID, ARCE, Switzerland, and Italy.

Recovered Islamic Lamps

Extensive efforts by the Ministry of Interior retrieved six Islamic lamps stolen from al-Refay on 1st January, 2017. The lamps are on display at the EMC as part of the "Egypt: the Cradle of Religions" exhibition (26 January, 2017).



Field Work

Several archaeological missions have started their work in January 2017: MoA-IFAO joint mission at Ain Sukhna in Suez; DAI at Shellal in Aswan; University of Seville (Spain) at the Funerary Temple of Amenhotep III in Luxor; IFAO in the Eastern Desert, Red Sea; ARCE at the Red Monastery in Sohag and at the Valley of the King in Luxor; Comasco Institute for Egyptology (Italy) at the temple of Amenhotep II in Luxor; IFAO in the Eastern Desert; University of Memphis in Dra Abu al-Naga in Luxor; Macquarie University (Australia) at Beni Hasan in al-Minya and Meir in Asyut; University of Cardiff (Wales) at Saqqara; Swiss Institute at Seyene, Aswan; University of Jaen (Spain), at Qubbet al-Hawa, Aswan; University of Liege (Belgium) at Qurna in Luxor.

Archaeological Discoveries

Twenty tombs were discovered by the Lund University mission in collaboration with MoA in Gebel al-Silsila. The tombs date to the New Kingdom, between the reigns of Kings Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. Human remains, fragments of stone and ceramic coffins, amulets and scarabs were found in the tombs. Animal remains were also found, indicating that the tombs were used as animal burials.



Repatriated Antiquities

- MoA received four objects from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs after being repatriated from the USA. The items include a Late Period painted linen mummy shroud, part of a sarcophagus lid, mummy hand and a wooden sarcophagus.
- MoA received four objects from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs after being repatriated from Switzerland. One was a stela, looted in 1990 from Behbeit al-Hagar temple in al-Gharbiyyah with a scene depicting a female deity holding an ankh symbol in her right hand standing before offerings.



Projects

Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)

- Steel and concrete work of the museum construction have been completed.
- Transporting heavy objects has resumed, with the transfer of a colossal head of King Akhenaten from the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, originals from the King's temple in Karnak. The colossal head will be part of the displays for GEM's partial opening.

National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC)

- The Higher Committee of NMEC has convened (16 January, 2017).
- Landscaping work is continuing. Signage is being installed.

NMEC's temporary exhibition on traditional Egyptian crafts is being finalised for inauguration mid-February.

Historic Cairo Project

- A tender was offered for five projects as part of a larger project to rescue 100 historical buildings in Old Cairo.
- Proposals for a project to repurpose the Baron Empain Palace in Heliopolis have been submitted. The proposals include plans for structural work, and conservation.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo (EMC)

A press conference was held at the EMC to announce the launch of the EMC Coffins Project. The project, funded by the US Ambassadors Fund, aims to document, conserve and restore the wooden sarcophagi stored in the museum's third floor and basement. The launch was attended by officials from MoA; USAID, US Ambassadors Fund and the US Embassy (17 January, 2017).



Conservation Projects

Restoration works of the Nubian temples have started, including Wady al-Sebu , al-Maharraqa and Amada. The conservation includes mechanical and chemical cleaning using organic solvents, as well as strengthening the stone blocks.



Meetings and Visits

- Professor Aly Abd al- Al, head of the Egyptian Parliament, paid the EMC an evening visit, accompanied by several members of parliament (3 January, 2017).
- The Minister of Antiquities participated in a parliamentary committee to discuss the Giza Plateau Development Project (3 January, 2017).
- The Minister of Antiquities inspected several archaeological sites, museums, and projects, accompanied by MoA officials in Cairo (Museum of Islamic Art, NMEC, al-Manasterly Palace, al-Rifa'y Mosque, Sultan Hassan Mosque, MoA workshops at the Salah al-Din Citadel, and al-Mu'izz Street); and in al-Qalyubiyah (Tall al-Yahudiyyah, Tall Atrib; Kafr Shobak Magazine).
- The Minister of Antiquities has met with the Ministers of Public Works, Communication, Housing, the former Minister of Environment, Members of the Parliament, Officials from the Syndicate Committee for the Syndicate of Archaeologists, Kazak Minister of Culture, Japanese and Senegalese Ambassadors, representative of the Jewish Community in the USA, USAID officials, Director of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, Director of the Polish Institute of Archaeology, and President of the Arabic world institute.



Dr Yasmin El Shazly, Supervisor of the Department of International Organizations and International Cooperation in the Minister's Office represented the Minister of Antiquities at the National Post COP22 Workshop, attended by the Minister of Water Resource and Irrigation, the Minister of Environment, UNESCO Assistant Director-General and UNESCO's Regional Bureau in the Arab Region.

- The Minister of Antiquities participated in a workshop with the Ministers of Tourism and Aviation, and with the governors of Aswan and Luxor governorates, to discuss developments in Upper Egypt, particularly pertaining to the role of youth, as part of the second Youth Conference in Aswan (28 January, 2017).

International Participation

- Dr Mahmoud Afifi, head of the Egyptian Antiquities Sector; Dr Hisham Hussein, director general of follow up in Northern Sinai; and Mr Mostafa al-Saghir, Minister's Scientific Office; travelled to China to discuss avenues of collaboration between the Chinese Archaeological Institute and the MoA.
- Several colleagues were granted approval for international travel, including: to Japan: Dr al-Ghareeb Sunbol (Head of Central Administration for Conservation), Ms Nevine al-Aref (Minister's Media Advisor), Ms Omaima Ali Atya (Head of EMC's Restoration Laboratory), Mr Adel Abd Al-Samee Kilany (Director of Archaeological Quarries Administration), and Mr Mohamed Mahmoud Abd al-Mobdy (Saqqara Inspectorate); to Italy: Mr Mina Magdy Shehata (NMEC Chemist); and to Switzerland: Ms Zeinab Ahmed Hassan (General Director of Administration of al-al-Qalyubiyah Conservation), and Mr Mahmoud Zaky Morsy Chief Inspector of Esna and Armant Inspectorate).

Training

- A scientific centre for archaeological training was established in al-Tod, Luxor. The centre will train Upper Egyptian archaeologists and conservators in various skills needed for fieldwork and publication, including excavation methodologies, archaeological illustration, ceramics, zooarchaeology, osteoarchaeology, and photography.

- Trainees in Sohag and Luxor completed the first phase of training with ARCE. Fifty-four conservators were trained at the Red Monastery in Suhag and at the Northern Chapel in the Temple of Khonsu and at TT110 on the West Bank of Luxor. Participants are now preparing a project to rehabilitate six Theban tombs based on what they have learned as part of this training.



Cultural Events and Community Outreach

- EMC has started organising guided tours for Egyptian visitors Sundays and Thursdays in the evenings. If interested in joining, please contact cultem1@gmail.com.
- Mr Saad Zaghoul, former Head of the Centre for Documentation of Egyptian Antiquities, was honoured at the MoA upon reaching retirement (5 January, 2017).
- EMC displayed six Coptic objects, including textiles and icons, as objects of the month in celebration of Coptic Christmas.
- MoA celebrated the eleventh festival of archaeologists at the Opera House. The annual event marks the date when Dr Mostafa Amer became the first Egyptian to head the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation in 1953. As has been customary, several archaeologists were honoured during the ceremony. The event was attended by Ministers Dr Ghada Waly, Dr Ashraf al-Sharqawy, former Ministers Farouk Hosny, Dr Moufid Shehab, Prof. Mamdouh Eldamaty, Prof. Mohamed Ibrahim, and actor Leila Elwi, in addition to many other public figures (15 January, 2017).



- EMC organised several cultural activities for children and adults to accompany the “Egypt: Cradle of Religions” exhibition at the EMC (26 January – 26 February, 2017).
- Several museums organised a variety of events for school children during the winter break. These include activities about ancient Egyptian food at the EMC, weaving at the Textile Museum, and mummification at al-Ismailiyah Museum.
- A mobile application was launched for the EMC. It is currently available for Android, and will soon be developed for other devices (26 January, 2017).
- MoA participated in the 48th Cairo International Book Fair in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Replicas and MoA publications are on sale (26 January – 10 February, 2017).

Protocol

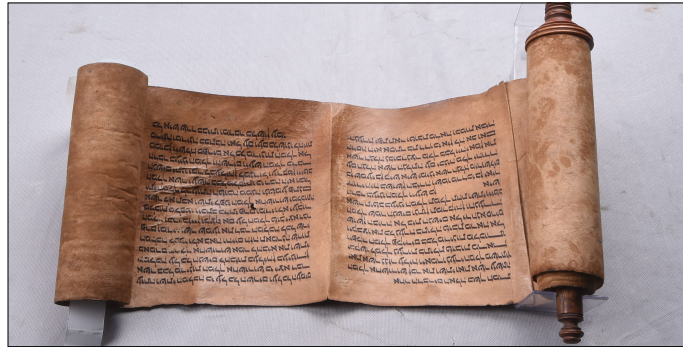
The MoA signed a protocol of cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, which aims to improve services provided to visitors of archaeological sites (3 January, 2017).

Temporary Exhibitions

Local Exhibitions

- EMC hosted an exhibition titled “Egypt: Cradle of Religions.” The exhibition recounts the history of the many religions that coexisted in Egypt (26 January – 26 February, 2017). Objects displayed in the “Egypt: Cradle of Religions” exhibition at the EMC.

Rosetta Museum organised an exhibition on weaponry during the eighteenth century. The exhibition includes different sorts of rifles, guns, and ammunition (1 January – 31 March, 2017).

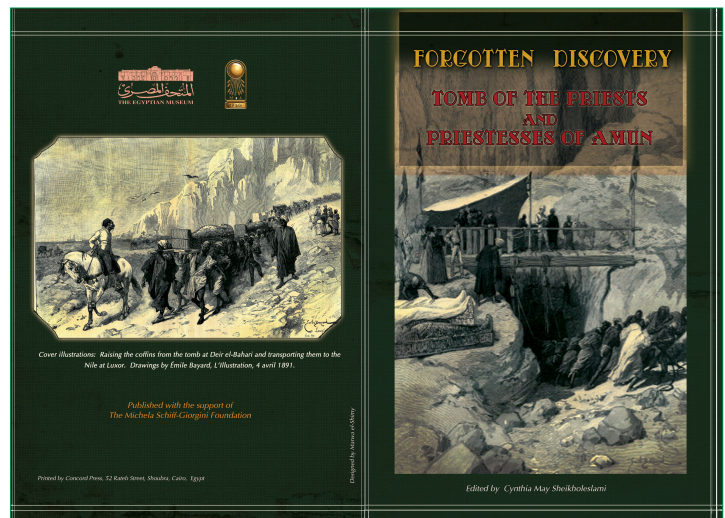


International Exhibitions

- “Golden Pharaohs and Pyramids” exhibition in Japan was moved from Kyoto to Toyama, where it will be on display until 26 March, 2017.
- “Sunken Cities: Egypt’s Lost Worlds” exhibition will move to Rietberg Museum in Switzerland on 10 February, 2017.

MoA Publications

The MoA published a catalogue for a new temporary exhibition „Forgotten discoveries: The Tomb of the Priests and Priestess of Amun,” which will held soon at the EMC. The catalogue contains presents the tomb’s history, which was discovered in 1891 near the temple of Hatshepsut in al-Deir al-Bahri.



Decrees

Decrees issued in November include:

- Approving the registration of al-Sayyeda Zainab Mosque and the domes of al- Atris and Ayedros in al-Sayyeda Zainab Islamic monuments (8 January, 2017).
- The Centre for Documentation of Egyptian Antiquities has started documenting the Esna temple.
- The MoA is continuing to offer foreigners a 30% discount on the Annual Antiquities Pass, and 20% on Luxor Pass, during February 2017.

Appointments

- Al-Shaimaa Mohammad Fathy was appointed General Director of the Minister’s Administrative Office.
- Mohamed Abd al-Fattah was appointed Deputy Director of the International Organizations Office for Cultural Heritage and International Cooperation.
- Adel Okasha was appointed General Director of Dahshur archaeological area.

The Geographic Information Systems Centre Started as an Egyptian-Finnish project set up in 2000 to protect cultural heritage through the establishment of an efficient information system, and the GIS Centre was officially declared an independent centre in 2006.

Geographic Information Systems is a system that stores, manipulates, analyses and manages spatial and geographical data. The analysed data can be extracted to aid with different projects and uses, such as in housing and agricultural projects, or building new roads.

The MoA's GIS Centre feeds spatial and geographical information about archaeological sites into its central system, delineating archaeological sites owned by the MoA, or under MoA supervision. Such a central system with all the basic and necessary information on a site is useful in general, but can also be referred to in the case of crises, or to coordinate with road construction, new development projects, and other governmental work that many affect archaeological sites.

The Centre also reviews maps and archival documents, correlating them with modern satellite imagery, to ensure accuracy. Regular site visits are needed, which not only allows the Centre's team to record a site's current state, but also collect GPS points and up-to-date photographs, as well as documenting threats affecting the site. The Centre also acts as a repository of information, which scholars can access through the Centre.

Over the last several years, the Centre has successfully completed several project, surveying, documenting, assessing threats and drawing plans to protect sites including al-Gomrok quarter in Alexandria, the Turkish quarter in Port Said, al-Qurna in Luxor, and Rosetta. This is in addition to documenting archaeological sites in Nubia, and preparing maps of archaeological sites in Egypt in general, as well as preparing the necessary maps to append to dossiers requesting the inclusion of sites on world heritage lists. Large national projects such as the Suez Canal extension, the fourth metro line in Cairo, and new roads across the country also required collaboration with the Centre in collecting geographical and archaeological data and producing maps to guide these projects.

Ongoing projects with other MoA departments include developing atlases for archaeological sites, document the Holy Family's Journey through Egypt, and preparing maps for adding sites to world heritage lists. Printed publications include atlases for different governorates. Completed ones include al-Sharqeyyah and Rosetta governorates, which are available through the MoA's gift shops.

Many staff and technicians make work at the Centre a possibility, these include archaeologists, IT specialists, programmer, geographers, and graphic designers.

More information about the Centre's projects can be found on their website: www.giscenter.gov.eg.



Monument of the Month

The Monastery of St Antony

Located at the foot of Mount Qalzam by the Red Sea, the monastery of St. Anthony is Egypt's oldest monastery. It is built around the centre where Antony, Egypt's first hermit, settled in the third century

The reputation of St Antony's asceticism spread well beyond the borders of Egypt, attracting disciples who began living there with him. After his death, the settlement developed into a larger monastic settlement. St Antony lived in a cave in the rocks adjacent to the southern part of the hermitage, in an extremely small space, seven meters into the bedrock. Today, the monastic complex extends well beyond its original core. The area today covers more than 18 acres, including fortified walls of limestone and mud bricks that reach a height of ten 10 meters.



The monastery's main door is through its northern wall. In antiquity, the only entrance was a small entrance from the back of the monastery, but its use was discontinued during the reign of Emperor Justinian after the monastery's second enclosure wall was built.

There monastery includes a three-storey fortress, where monks would have sought refuge during tribal raids. The keep is accessed via bridge, and contains a well and storage spaces. The second floor has

a large dining room and on the third floor, a number of rooms that were used for the accommodation of visitors. A small church dedicated to the Archangel Michael is on the fourth floor of the keep.

Modern buildings outside of the ancient enclosure include several spaces for accommodating visitors, shops and a library housing rare books and manuscripts, many of which date back to the thirteenth century.



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