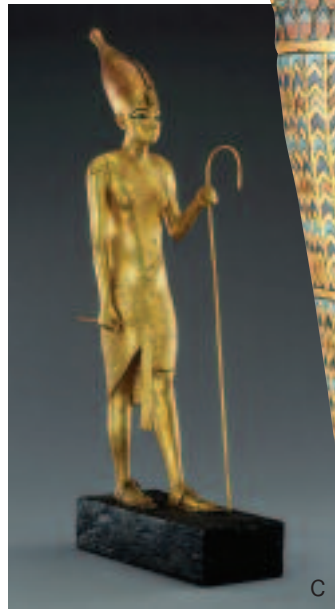


King Tut Exhibition Comes to Philadelphia

PENN MUSEUM'S
DAVID P.
SILVERMAN IS
NATIONAL
CURATOR
BY JAMES
MCCLELLAND

THE INTERNATIONAL TOURING exhibition *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs* will end its tour of the U.S. next year at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute, February 3 to September 30, 2007. David P. Silverman, a guiding light during the first King Tut exhibition in the 1970s and the Penn Museum's Curator-in-Charge of the Egyptian Section, is the National Curator for this new exhibition. How did this come about?

In the beginning the exhibition was only scheduled to visit two places in Europe: Basel, Switzerland, and Bonn, Germany. Then, an American company, Arts and Exhibitions, International,



Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs is sponsored by National Geographic, AEG, and Arts and Exhibitions International, with cooperation from the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities. [a] This bust of Tutankhamun portrays the young king as a youthful figure rather than a divine being. [b] This calcite bust of the king depicts Tutankhamun wearing the *nemes* headdress bearing the protective vulture and cobra deities. [c] This statuette of the king depicts him wearing the tall crown of Upper Egypt and holding symbols of his kingship, the crook and flail. [d] Far right, Tutankhamun possessed four miniature viscera coffins fashioned of gold and inlaid with colored glass and semi-precious stones.

Andreas F. Voegelin, Antikenmuseum Basel and Sammlung Ludwig

King Tut's Mysterious Death

One of the sponsors of the traveling show is *National Geographic*—the last gallery in the exhibition is theirs. Essentially, it illustrates the importance of science and new scientific techniques used by Egyptologists to learn more about the past. “In this case,” says Silverman, “it has to do directly with the CT scans that were performed on the mummy of Tutankhamun in January 2005. From their results, they found that the mummification process was not as bad as everyone had thought. Another thing we learned—but it also creates more mysteries—has to do with how Tut died. It’s very clear from these scans that he probably died at no more than 20 years of age. There have always been theories of how he died, and whether he was murdered. Books have been written on it and TV documentaries produced and most Egyptologists now have dismissed this theory. The CT scans provide clear scientific evidence that the damage to the back of his head seems to be post-mortem and clearly not from a blow on the head, as suggested in 1968.”

“What was interesting was that on one of his legs above the knee there was clearly an injury that did not heal. There is some speculation—though it can’t be proven—that that injury might have become infected and that it might have led to blood poisoning. Considering what happens in a tropical climate, this would not have been an unusual case, and he, in fact, could have died from blood poisoning.”



Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities.



approached Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, about touring the show in America. When Hawass decided the show should come to the U.S., he wanted Silverman to be the National Curator.

“For several reasons,” says the affable Silverman. “Zahi Hawass was a former student of mine in the 1980s and he was a graduate of our Ph.D. program.” Given a Fulbright scholarship to study here, Hawass impressed Silverman with his intelligence, perseverance, and dedication. “When it was announced that the show would come to America, it was already in Basel. At Hawass’ suggestion, I was asked to go there, see the exhibition, and make decisions on how we could tell the story from the objects that had already been selected by Hawass.”

David Silverman usually travels to Egypt once a year to work at Saqqara in the cemetery next to the royal tomb of the Old Kingdom Pharaoh, Teti, of the 6th Dynasty. For 300–400 years after Teti’s reign, the cult of the King survived and guarded this sacred area.



Mohammed Ismail (top), Ken Garrett (top inset), David Silverman (bottom)

What were Silverman's responsibilities? "I was responsible for all the educational materials, the interpretation of the design, and the story line—the way the objects are set up and all the texts and labels that are associated with them. I had to make sure that everything was consistent and correct." The biggest challenge was completing an exhibition of this magnitude and scope in roughly a year's time! One reason Hawass wanted Silverman to do this exhibition was that when the first King Tut show opened in the States in the 1970s, Silverman was the curator of the Chicago portion. Having written all the text panels and labels that traveled then, he was familiar with the nature of such a blockbuster exhibit—in fact, the original 'blockbuster.'

The biggest problem Silverman faced was keeping track of all the text rewrites. "It went through a lot of phases and it went to the media so it was very difficult to make sure we were all speaking with one voice and to make sure our aims and our goals were uniform."

THE MUSEUM'S OWN NEW EXHIBIT

To complement the new traveling Tut show, Penn Museum's own special exhibit, *Amarna, Ancient Egypt's Place in the Sun*, will run concurrently. Jennifer Houser Wegner and Josef W. Wegner will serve as co-curators for this exhibit, along with David Silverman. Opening in November 2006, this new exhibit will complement the traveling Tut show by concentrating on the city of Amarna—where Tutankhamun spent his childhood—and the location where Tut's father, Akhenaten, centered his revolutionary religion.

"What we're doing is telling part of the story of Tut that is not actually in the touring exhibition," says Silverman. "It's pretty much a complement to what you'll see at the Franklin Institute." For example, several objects in the Museum's exhibit will also directly relate to Tutankhamun. These include the only known black bronze figure of a kneeling Tut with surviving gold inlays, a figure of the god Amun represented with King Tut's features (similar to one found in the traveling exhibition), and a figurine depicting the body of one of Tut's half-sisters (complementing a figurine in the traveling exhibit that shows another half-sister's head). Furthermore, the Museum's exhibit will also display some everyday objects excavated from houses of ordinary people at Amarna.

"We're interested in having many more visitors attend the Museum to learn about ancient Egypt," says Silverman. "The exhibition at the Franklin Institute is a fantastic exhibition, but it's only a small portion of ancient Egyptian history, roughly a century." In contrast, Penn's collection runs the gamut of almost 5,000 years of Egyptian civilization. With approxi-



This statue of Amun, possibly from Thebes, has features reminiscent of those of Tutankhamun. It will be on display in the Penn Museum's new exhibit. Late Dynasty 18–early Dynasty 19 (ca. 1332–1292 BC), Graywacke, h. 17 3/4 in, UPM # E14350.

mately 40,000 catalogued objects from both Upper and Lower Egypt, it is the third-largest collection in the U.S. The Museum's new exhibit will use about 2,000 sq. ft. of completely redesigned space with about 150 objects on display, many never on exhibition before."

So when *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of Pharaohs* comes to the Franklin Institute, be sure to also visit the Penn Museum and become reacquainted with its Egyptian exhibits, both old and new. 🏠

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