

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, SHIBUYA, TOKYO

by **Tadashi Kikugawa, Director**
& **Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi, Chief Curator**

Photos courtesy of the Museum

Tokyo's new Ancient Egyptian Museum is the result of a private initiative which began in the late 1990's. Within a decade, the importance of the collection was recognized in Japan. That recognition resulted in two temporary-loan exhibitions, each accompanied by a catalogue, that of the second exhibition containing objects acquired after the closing of the first exhibition, although all of the objects in that were again on view in the second. An aggressive acquisition policy soon increased the holdings to such an extent that it was no longer practical to house the growing collection in a private home. Therefore a decision was then made to establish an exhibition space which would allow the collection to be a means of introducing visitors to ancient Egypt's civilization, inasmuch as such a specialized



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Entry area of
the Dig House
recreation



museum did not already exist in Japan. A suitable venue was identified and re-configured into eight galleries, each with a particular theme.

The installation features two audio-visual presentations, which provide visitors with an overview of ancient Egyptian history and a brief introduction to the Museum itself and its holdings. The design of the series of architecturally enhanced spaces is intended to contribute to a lively, vicarious experience of Egypt in the early Twentieth Century.

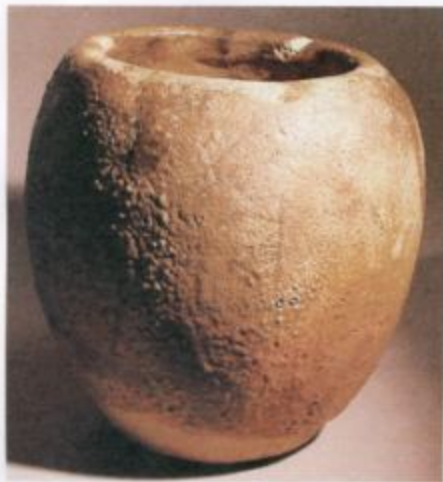
The Dig House gallery is evocative of the ambiance of accommodations of foreign archaeological missions in Egypt. The visitor will find the tools of the trade, with their function explained, as well as exhibition cases and free standing vitrines presenting a diachronic survey of ancient Egyptian art from the Predynastic Period to the end of the New Kingdom. Here one finds an ivory figurine with inlaid eyes, dating to about 3200 BC, its body bearing incised decoration, which may well represent a garment, and a ceramic jar.

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Among the objects displayed in the Dig House gallery are a Predynastic ivory figurine (above) & an inlaid faience head with the cartouches of Ramesses II.





Among the Dig House displays are a 1st Dynasty ceramic vessel inscribed for King Djed (l.); a statuette fragment with the name of Queen Nefertiti (below); glass inlays depicting Ostris (r.); a ushabti head of Akhenaten (below left), & a relief of the Amarna period (bottom left).



ramic vessel of First Dynasty date inscribed with the name of King Djed. There are also five cylinder seals in various materials, ranging in date from the Archaic Period to the Old Kingdom; a faience dish of Middle Kingdom date with model figs as food offerings; and a faience throw-stick, which may represent a miniature version of larger ones used in hunting lowl in the Egyptian papyrus marshes.

This gallery is particularly strong in objects from the New Kingdom. In addition to an extraordinary collection of necklaces in glass and faience, there are toiletry objects, including two mirrors; knobs in faience featuring the cartouches of Amenhotep III and Rameses II; and a quartzite fragment inscribed for Nefertiti, the beautiful queen of Akhenaten, depicted in a pleated dress woven of the finest Egyptian linen. There is also a remarkable fragmentary torso in Egyptian blue inscribed for Nefertari, queen of Rameses II. She is represented holding a lily scepter, the emblem of female royal-authority. The inscription on the back pillar assures the identification of this queen.



The Treasure Gallery is interactive. It demands that the visitor enter a confined space, in order to locate a key with which to unlock a "treasure chest." Within it one finds an assortment of precious objects, including examples of gold jewelry. The experience continues because the visitor is then asked to locate a papyrus scroll, which — when properly examined — reveals a symbol marking hidden treasures which are secreted in hidden chambers placed into the wall of the Funerary Gallery.

That space is dark, in order that the visitor, armed with a flashlight, can sense what it feels like when TV luminaries enter equally dim-lighted spaces on many of their special telecasts. The centerpiece of the gallery is a

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Entrance to the Tokyo museum's Interactive Treasure Gallery, where visitors find a "treasure chest" (inset below), containing a papyrus scroll with clues to objects hidden in the walls of the Faunary Gallery.



paint-and-gilded wooden anthropoid coffin of Late Period date, inscribed for the Lady Taakhetweret. In keeping with her divine status in the Afterlife, her face has been gilded. She wears a pectoral around her neck which, is surrounded by a broad collar ornamented with floral motifs. Of particular interest are the scenes depicting her lying on a lion-shaped funerary bier attended by the jackal-headed god Anubis, below which is a scene from the *Book of the Dead*, with her heart being weighed against the feather of Truth. The coffin's bottom, visible in a mirror, shows the goddesses Isis and Nephthys worshipping their brother Osiris in the form of a *djed*-pillar, beneath which is a representation of Nut, the winged sky-goddess.

This object is complemented with panels from other coffins, a funerary shroud, a number of ushabtis and a canopic jar. There is also a selection of papyri, tomb paintings and funerary stela, including one of Eighteenth Dynasty date, depicting its owner, Wenheru, sniffing a water lily flower. The inscription at the bottom explains that the figure to the right is offering cool water for Wenheru's ka.

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The Temple Gallery is devoted to reliefs and sculpture. Here visitors find a granite statuette of an anonymous, Ramesside official depicted wearing a fashionable wig exposing the ears. He is bare-chested and supports a standard against his shoulder, which is topped by an aegis, an object designed as the head and neck of a deity wearing a broad collar. In this case the deity may be identified as Sekhmet, because the aegis is comprised of a lioness head



Centerpiece of the Museum's Funerary Gallery is a large Late Period painted-&-gilded wooden coffin belonging to Lady Taashetweret, with a scene from the Book of the Dead depicting her heart being weighed against the feather of Truth. The coffin's backside (visible in a mirror) shows Isis & Nephthys worshipping Osiris in the form of a djed-pillar. Below this is a depiction of the winged sky-goddess, Nut.





Left, 19th Dynasty limestone statuette of the Asiatic falcon-god Huron, with the double cartouches of King Merneptah, perhaps inspired by the monumental statue of the god found at Tanis & now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Below, Ramesside granite statuette fragment of an official with a Sekhmet aegis. Both sculptures are displayed in the Tokyo museum's Temple Gallery.



with a sun disc and uraeus. Such standard-bearing statues were often placed in accessible areas of a temple, so that pilgrims could address their prayers to these individuals, who would act as intercessors. They would assure that they would convey the pilgrim's prayer to the deity represented by the aegis.

Anear contemporary is a Nineteenth Dynasty limestone statuette of the falcon-god Huron, inscribed on the breast with cartouches of the nomen and prenomen of Merneptah, the thirteenth son and eventual successor of Ramesses II. The importance of this statuette is due to the fact that it represents a god of ancient Near Eastern origin, who was worshipped by Asiatic colonists settled on the

Giza plateau during the Ramesside period. At that time the Great Sphinx there was known as the god Harmachis and the Asiatic colonists living in its shadow confused that Egyptian deity with their god Huron and so adopted him, to serve as their god of resurrection. Thus, during the Ramesside period several statues of falcons were inscribed as the Asiatic god Huron. Of these, the most famous, is in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, inscribed for Ramesses II. It is very likely that this monumental statue served as the model for our falcon statuette. Although it was found at Tanis, current research suggests that the Cairo image originally stood at Giza, in the vicinity of the Great Sphinx, and was subsequently moved to that Delta city during the Third Intermediate Period. It was doubtless damaged during this transport, which accounts for the replacement of the face of the falcon in a stone of a perceptibly different color.

The Museum installation ends with the Patron's Gallery, appointed to reflect a sitting room of the Victorian era, with a settee facing a showcase containing a wooden canopic-jar lid once in the MacGregor Collection and frag-



Left, Fragmentary Late Period statue of an official.

Above, Roman-period head of the god Serapis.

Opposite, View of the Tokyo museum's Patron's Gallery, which evokes the Victorian sitting room of a collector of ancient Egyptian art of that era, as homage to the philanthropists of the 19th & early 20th centuries whose financial backing of excavations contributed to the development of the discipline of Egyptology.

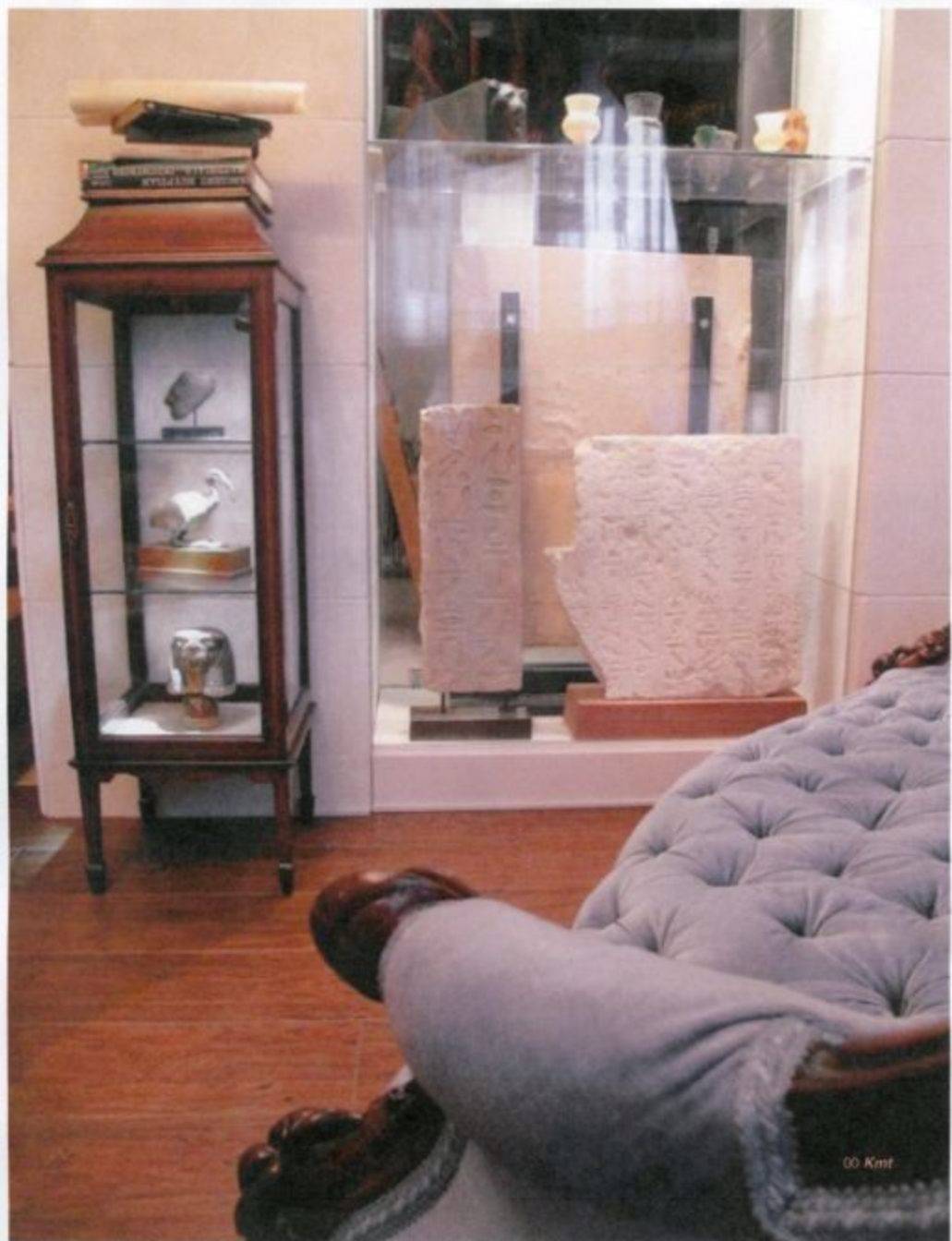
mentary portrait of an Amarna royal, reportedly handled by Howard Carter. This gallery is homage to all earlier collectors and philanthropists whose efforts contributed to the development of the discipline of Egyptology. The visitor may also consult any number of reference books which are contained in a small library.

The collection includes a large number of glass and glazed objects. These are the subject of on-going, non-invasive analyses at the Tokyo University of Science, the results of which are archived at the Museum for comparative purposes, fulfilling one of the Museum's missions.

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The Ancient Egyptian Museum plans to rotate its collections on a periodic basis, with four projected exhibitions scheduled over the next two years, devoted to: A Survey of Ancient Egyptian Art—Predynastic Period to the Coptic Era; The Art of the Eighteenth Dynasty, special emphasis on the Amarna period; Ancient Egyptian Glass; and Ancient Egyptian Faience.

Due to limitations of space, this private museum is open to the general public by appointment only, upon payment of an entry fee. The Ancient Egyptian Museum is located at 801 Maison Shibuya, on the eighth floor at 1-12-18 Jinnan Street, diagonally across the street from Tower Records, in the Shibuya-ku district of Tokyo, a short five-minute walk from Shibuya station. (Zip 150-0041; Phone 03-6809-0718.)



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