



# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

**For Immediate Release**

Contact:

Keri Murawski, Manager of Communications  
212.988.7700 ext.64, kmurawski@afaweb.org

## **TEMPLES AND TOMBS:**

### **TREASURES OF EGYPTIAN ART FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

EXHIBITION OF RARE EGYPTIAN MASTERWORKS TO TRAVEL NATIONWIDE  
ORGANIZED BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS AND THE BRITISH MUSEUM



New York, NY (March 10, 2006) – The American Federation of Arts and the British Museum are pleased to announce the September 2006 opening of *Temples and Tombs: Treasures of Egyptian Art from The British Museum*. This exciting exhibition of approximately 85 magnificent objects selected from one of the foremost collections of Egyptian antiquities in the world spans the full range of pharaonic history – from shortly before the Third Dynasty, about 2686 B.C. to the Roman occupation

of the fourth century A.D. – and provides a rare opportunity to view renowned Egyptian masterworks and lesser-known treasures before their final return to the British Museum at the end of the tour.

Oklahoma City Museum of Art will be the opening venue for *Temples and Tombs*, which will travel to four additional venues, including the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens in Jacksonville, Florida; the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, North Carolina; the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History; and the Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art, History and Science in Fresno, California.

-more-

---

*Fragment of a Battle Scene with Defeated Asiatics*

From Thebes, Deir el-Bahri, funerary temple of Mentuhotep II  
Middle Kingdom, Eleventh Dynasty, reign of Mentuhotep II (ca. 2055-2004 B.C.)  
Limestone, painted, 23 3/4 x 26 inches (60.2 x 66 cm)  
The British Museum; gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1906 (EA 732)

AFA Director Julia Brown remarked, "*Temples and Tombs* marks the second collaboration between the AFA and the British Museum, and we could not be more pleased to have the opportunity to work together to bring these extraordinary works of antiquity to a wide national audience."

Included in the exhibition is sculpture, relief, papyri, ostraca, jewelry, cosmetic objects, and funerary items in a variety of media – including stone, wood, terra cotta, gold, glass and papyrus – that reflect the richness and scope of the British Museum's exceptional collection. Selected by Edna R. Russmann, Curator of Egyptian, Classical and Ancient Middle Eastern Art at the Brooklyn Museum, *Temples and Tombs* explores four distinct themes: the king and the temple; objects from the lives of artists and nobles; statues of Egyptians from temples and tombs; and the tomb, death, and the afterlife. The four thematic divisions of the exhibition allow for a specific examination of these masterworks in the context of the Egyptian temporal and cosmic world view.

Featuring numerous exceptional examples of royal representation, the first section of the exhibition examines the role of the Egyptian king as the intermediary between the divine and human worlds. Immediately recognizable by his garments, crown, and the oval cartouche in which his name was usually inscribed, an Egyptian king was the highest-ranking mortal and the individual best able to please the gods. This section of the exhibition also considers the function of the temple, as the central physical expression of the unique relationship between the king and the gods.



-more-

---

*Head of a Queen or Goddess*

Possibly from Sais

New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, reign of Thutmose IV (ca. 1400-1390 B.C.)

Black granite, height 10 ¼ inches (25.8 cm)

The British Museum; acquired in 1875, purchased from George Gwilt (EA 956)

The second section of the exhibition is devoted to objects used by artists and nobles, offering an insightful look into Egyptian daily life. Among the included items are objects of decoration and protection, such as amulets, jewelry, and cosmetic containers. Statues and paintings of figures portray the Egyptians' enjoyment of jewelry; their hairstyles, makeup, and clothing; their household furniture; and the company they kept, including servants and family. Other items, such as a scribal palette, drawing board, and inked grid, provide information about artisans' working lives. Hieroglyphic writing on many of the objects demonstrates the masterly level of graphic communication attained by the Egyptians.



*Temples and Tombs* also considers the role of the private statue, in the context of both the temple and the tomb. The earliest statues of private individuals were found in tombs, as a place where the spirit of the deceased could reside. Private statues were also found in temples, representing an individual's status, wealth, and ability to partake in cult offerings. The examples in this section allow viewers to see both

the continuity and change in the representation of private art from about 2600 B.C. to the first century A.D.

The exhibition concludes with an exploration of the Egyptian concepts of the tomb, death, and the afterlife. Seeking to extend life after death, the Egyptians made provisions in their burials for the afterlife, although only the affluent could afford the full array of tomb items and rituals intended to protect the body of the deceased and insure a successful afterlife for the soul. Many of the bowls, palettes, headrests, ostraca, and other utilitarian objects in the exhibition are embedded with protective symbols because they were intended to accompany their owners to the tomb.

-more-

---

*Pectoral Plaque: Amenemhat IV Before Atum*

Provenance unknown

Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, Reign of Amenemhat IV (ca. 1808-1799 B.C.)

Gold, 1 1/4 x 1 1/4 inches (3 x 3 cm)

The British Museum; donated by Birmingham Jewellers' and Silversmiths' Association, 1929 (EA 59194)

In her contribution to the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition, Guest Curator Edna R. Russmann explains, "The Egyptians were passionate in their love of life. It inspired in them an equally strong determination to make life last forever, a goal they pursued with extraordinary intensity and ingenuity. It seems ironic that we should be the accidental beneficiaries of their quest for eternal life. We are extremely fortunate that this quest extended to surrounding themselves in death with objects from life in tombs and temple caches."



**Tour Schedule:**

Oklahoma City Museum of Art Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	September 7 - November 26, 2006
The Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens Jacksonville, Florida	December 22, 2006 - March 18, 2007
North Carolina Museum of Art Raleigh, North Carolina	April 15 - July 8, 2007
Albuquerque Museum of Art and History Albuquerque, New Mexico	November 16, 2007 - February 10, 2008
Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art, History and Science Fresno, California	March 7 - June 1, 2008

*Temples and Tombs: Treasures of Egyptian Art from The British Museum* is organized by the American Federation of Arts and The British Museum. The exhibition is made possible, in part, by the Philip and Janice Levin Foundation fund for Collection-Based Exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts.

-more-

---

*Striding Figure of Meryrahashtef*

From Sedment

Old Kingdom, Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2345-2181 B.C.)

Ebony and sycamore, height 22 7/8 inches (58.1 cm)

The British Museum; acquired in 1923, purchased with the assistance of the National Art Collections Fund (EA 55722)

**Publication:** A fully illustrated catalogue published by the American Federation of Arts in association with the University of Washington Press accompanies the exhibition. It includes an introduction by Guest Curator Edna R. Russmann and essays by Nigel Strudwick, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan at the British Museum, and T.G.H. James, former Keeper of Egyptian Art at the British Museum.

**American Federation of Arts:** The AFA is a nonprofit institution that organizes art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishes exhibition catalogues, and develops education programs. For more information on the AFA, please visit [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org).

**The British Museum:** Drawing more than 5.5 million visitors annually, the British Museum illuminates ancient and living cultures around the world by preserving, presenting, enhancing, and researching the unique collections in its care. Founded in 1753, it has been open to the public since 1759. The Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, the largest and most comprehensive collection of its kind outside Cairo, illustrates every aspect of ancient Egyptian culture, from the Predynastic period through the Coptic (Christian) era, from 4000 B.C. to the 12th century A.D. For more information, please visit [www.british-museum.ac.uk](http://www.british-museum.ac.uk).

**Press Info:** Publicity images may be downloaded from the AFA web site at [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org), in the media corner section. For additional information, please contact Keri Murawski, AFA Manager of Communications, at 212.988.7700 ext. 64 or [kmurawski@afaweb.org](mailto:kmurawski@afaweb.org).