

ART & EXHIBITS

Exclusive: 'Ramses the Great' is coming to S.F. for the first time. Here's where you can see the exhibition

Tony Bravo | June 6, 2022 Updated: June 6, 2022, 2:04 pm



Falcon-headed collar and counterweight of Princess Neferuptah Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12. Gold, carnelian, and feldspar.

Photo: Sandro Vannini Image / Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

The de Young Museum will be the exclusive West Coast venue for the international touring exhibition “Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs,” the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco announced Monday, June 6.

The show, which opens Aug. 20 and runs through Feb. 12, is the first new exhibition dedicated to Egyptian ruler Ramses II in 30 years and is the first to be presented in San Francisco. Tickets go on sale for museum members June 22, with tickets made available to the general public starting July 6.

“‘Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs’ reveals the power and splendor of ancient Egypt, and expands on the history conveyed within our own ancient art collections,” FAMSF Director and CEO Thomas P. Campbell said in a statement. “Once the exhibition completes its international tour, these objects will return to Egyptian museums and will likely not travel again for decades.”

Although Ramses’ tomb in the Valley of the Kings was plundered during ancient times, the exhibition is able to make use of artifacts from other royal tombs including ones in Dahshur and Tanis to suggest the kind of pieces that would have been included in Ramses’ burial. The exhibition is slated to showcase more than 180 objects including jewelry, royal statuary, artworks, precious gold and silver items, sarcophagi and masks, many of which are newly discovered and have never left Egypt.

Recently discovered animal mummies from the Saqqara necropolis will also be on view for the first time, among them small cats, lion cubs and a mongoose.



Funerary mask of Wendjebauendjed Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 21. Gold, alabaster and glass.

Photo: Sandro Vannini Image / Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Renée Dreyfus, the newly endowed George and Judy Marcus Distinguished Curator, and curator in charge of ancient art at FAMSF, called the pieces part of an unrivaled trove and “jumped at the chance to have the museum acquire the exhibition.”

“Ramses the Great is regarded as as the most celebrated and most powerful pharaoh of the new kingdom,” said Dreyfus, who has worked for the museums for 45 years. “That was Egypt’s golden age, and that meant that he was overseeing a very wealthy and powerful empire. The exquisite sculpture and the great architecture, the monumental temples that he built to himself and to the gods, were meant for the ages.”

“Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs” comes to San Francisco in partnership with the Supreme Council of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt and is produced by World Heritage Exhibitions, a subsidiary of Cityneon Holdings.



Lid from the hawk-headed coffin of Sheshonq II Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 22. Silver.

Photo: Sandro Vannini Image / Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Ramses II, the third pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty of Egypt, was considered a distinguished military leader with his many campaigns across the African continent. He's renowned for his large-scale building projects, which included the Ramesseum temple complex at Qurna, the Abu Simbel temple complex near the Egypt-Sudan border, and a series of monuments to himself built across Sudan's Nubian region. He also has the distinction of being one of the longest-ruling kings of Egypt, with a 67-year reign.

In popular culture, he is thought to be the ruler depicted in the Old Testament story of Moses and the Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt.

In addition to the artifacts, Dreyfus notes the exhibition's use of technology. Drone photography, immersive video and photo murals will be utilized to show Ramses' epic building projects and illustrate the story of his triumph at the chariot Battle of Kadesh. A virtual reality component, "Ramses and Nefertari: Journey to Osiris," will also be installed in the museum's Piazzoni Murals Room (viewable for an additional charge) and includes cinematic motion chairs that take visitors through the Abu Simbel and Nefertari's Tomb monuments.

"How are you going to show the scale of the monuments and the bigger-than-life image that Ramses presented?" Dreyfus asked. "You do that with photo blowups, videos and multimedia presentations."

"Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs" 9:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. Opens Aug. 20. On view through Feb. 12. \$20-\$40. Additional charge for "Ramses and Nefertari: Journey to Osiris" to be announced. De Young Museum, 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive, S.F. 415-750-3600. deyoung.famsf.org



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