

Nevine El-Aref, Monday 23 Oct 2023

The "Ramses and the Gold of the Pharaohs" exhibition is to open its doors in Sydney, Australia, on 18 November in its fourth stop, as announced in a press conference held at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC).



Around 100,000 tickets were sold a month before the official opening of the 10-city tour exhibition.

The Australian Museum will host the exhibition where the coffin of Ramses II, one of the most impressive royal coffins discovered in ancient Egypt, will be among its collection that will be unveiled to Australian audiences; this rare artefact is on loan to the museum.

Ramses' coffin is rarely permitted to leave Egypt and Sydney will be the second city in the world, after Paris, to display it.

Before the discovery of the Deir El-Bahari royal mummies cache in 1881, ancient Egyptian kings were nothing but stories transmitted by travellers and historians, or scenes recorded on the walls of temples and tombs and the paintings of painters and epigraphers, said Ahmed Ghoneim, CEO of the NMEC.

Ramses II is one of those royalties, whose fame spread all over the world, even before discovering his mummy, due to the architectural monuments he built like the monumental structures and colossi in Luxor and Karnak temples, the great funerary Ramesseum temple, and Abu Simbel temples, he added.

"Ramses II's coffin, which was exhibited in the NMEC and will be displayed in Sydney, would be the ambassador of ancient Egypt and its great civilization," Ghoneim pointed out.

"Egyptian treasures have always mesmerized the world for centuries," said Mostafa Waziry, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), highlighting the enigmatic nature of Egypt's origins, religions, and monumental architecture, many of which were constructed during Ramses II's rule.

"I expect the exhibition in its fourth stop in Sydney to be another success, as it received 817,000 visitors during the five-month stay in Paris," Waziry asserted.

"Egyptians have secured an eternal place in history due to their ability to transcend age and time. I invite visitors to discover why Ramses II is often regarded as the greatest, most celebrated, and most powerful pharaoh of all time," he added.

While Zahi Hawass, the renowned Egyptologist and former Minister of Antiquities, was reviewing his recent excavations in Ramses II's tomb in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor during a press conference, he told reporters that Ramses, as one of the longest-lived pharaohs, identified himself as "King of all the Kings" and that his 66-year reign is considered Egypt's most glorious time.

He was also known as the "Master of Builders" as he erected more monuments than any other ancient Egyptian pharaoh. So, he was regarded by the Egyptians as "Ramses the Great." Thus, Egyptologists expected his tomb to be full of wonderful treasures, especially if compared with the tomb of a minor king like Tutankhamun, Hawass added.

He explained that currently the tomb's state is not as expected as it underwent many difficult conditions like successive thefts, random digging in search of hidden treasures, and severe rain floods that destroyed its beautiful reliefs and inscriptions.

The tomb's passages and internal rooms were completely blocked, so many archaeological missions failed to clean it from the debris and reveal its secrets.

However, the Egyptian excavation mission, which was in January 2021, could remove all the debris and thus revealed secrets about the construction and pictorial program of the tomb.

"It is in fact the only royal tomb full of inscriptions, decorations, and of course architecture in the Valley of the Kings," Hawass asserted.

The excavations revealed many new scenes depicted on the tomb walls, representing important chapters from the ancient Egyptian funerary afterlife books like the "Book of Gates" and the "Book of Imy-Duat," or "What is in the Afterlife."

The tomb's shaft, the deepest among the shafts of the Valley of the Kings's royal tombs, was also uncovered completely for the first time. "Surprisingly, it is decorated like the walls, carrying three marvellous scenes and inscriptions that represent other chapters from the afterlife books," Hawass noted.

The mission also could measure the size of Ramses's funerary treasure using a measurement system, showing evidence that the king's huge funerary furniture was moved outside the tomb not by robbers but by the priests of the Egyptian god Amun in the Late Period, Hawass pointed out.

The excavation showed that the priests and their architects could not take the large-size objects outside the tomb in the same way the king's men brought them inside. So, they had to dig the floors and ceilings to expand them and thus remove the treasures. Given the fact that these treasures were not destroyed or taken by robbers, there is still a possibility of discovering them, he added.

Hawass described the exhibition as an unprecedented event which aimed not only to spread the magic of the pharaohs in the West but also for all the nations to see the greatness of that civilization which "combined perfection in workmanship and absolute beauty."

"We are excited to bring these treasures to the land down under! I'm sure it will be a big success," said John Norman, president of Neon Creative, celebrating the opening of the exhibition.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has played an instrumental role in fostering this spirit of friendship and cooperation that started in 2005 with the launch of the Tutankhamun exhibition in Los Angeles, Norman explained, praising its efforts in promoting Egypt as a tourist destination, which opened the door for countless travellers to explore its beauty and wonders.

"As we celebrate this milestone of two decades of friendship and support, let us not forget the importance of preserving and cherishing this heritage for future generations. May we continue to work hand in hand, nurturing the bond between our nations and sharing the wonders of Egypt with the world," Norman added.

The carved, wooden coffin will be the star attraction in the exhibition, which includes over 181 rare objects, like glittering golden masks, exquisite jewellery, amulets, and animal sarcophagi, said Kim McKay AO, the Australian Museum's director and CEO.

"This beautiful sarcophagus is a work of inestimable value and a powerful symbol of one of the greatest leaders of the ancient world. Egyptians worshipped their Pharaohs, and their devotion to Ramses II can be seen through the craftsmanship of the coffin," McKay explained.

"This international collaboration between the two countries, as well as our exhibition partners, Neon Global and World Heritage Exhibitions, marks a new chapter in the way we share culture with our visitors and is an opportunity for the Australian Museum to enhance its global reputation and consolidate these valuable partnerships," he added.

Through the priceless artefacts of the exhibition, the whole world will see how the pharaohs made their glory through work and creativity.



The exhibition's journey abroad had its first stop in Houston in November 2021, second stop in San Francisco in August 2022, and third stop in Paris in April 2023.

Search Keywords:
Ramses Australia

Short link:
<https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/510795.aspx>