

MEDIA RELEASE



EGYPTIAN MUMMIES: EXPLORING ANCIENT LIVES WORLD PREMIERE

Cutting-edge technology reveals the secrets of mummies from the British Museum in a world premiere exclusive to the Powerhouse Museum

10 December 2016 – 25 April 2017

Sydney, Australia: The world premiere of *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives* will open at the Powerhouse Museum next month. Ancient cultures meet modern technologies in this exhibition that takes audiences beyond the wrappings to reveal the mysteries of mummification buried for thousands of years. Australian audiences will have a chance to see inside mummies from the **British Museum** collection via the latest non-invasive computed tomography (CT) scan and 3D visualisation technology when the exhibition opens in Sydney on 10 December 2016.

The six mummies, who lived and died in Egypt between 1800 and 3000 years ago, were scanned at Royal Brompton Hospital in London. They will be displayed in their historical, geographical and social contexts alongside 200 objects exploring themes such as mummification, gods and goddesses, personal adornment, state of health and medicine, food and diet, musical instruments, and childhood. Visitors will be able to virtually peel back the layers of history through interactive 3D visualisations of CT scans and discover for themselves six carefully mummified individuals.

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) Director, Dolla Merrillees, said: "This is a rare opportunity to get a close-up look at the mummies of the British Museum. They are in exceptional condition and now, thanks to modern technology, we are able to uncover their stories and secrets while preserving their dignity and leaving them intact. With a combination of Egyptian history and interactive science, *Egyptian Mummies* is the ideal family exhibition this summer," said Ms Merrillees.

Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts, Troy Grant, said: "This exciting exhibition will fascinate both children and adults presenting six very different individuals from the ancient world. The exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to experience the intersection of art and science that this game changing technology enables," said Minister Grant.

Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, Stuart Ayres, said: “This Summer, visitors to Sydney can journey back in time to Ancient Egypt. *Egyptian Mummies* will travel to Australia for the first time, making Sydney the inaugural destination for visitors to meet these individuals and discover more about their stories,” said Minister Ayres.

Co-Curator of the exhibition, Project Curator at the British Museum and Egyptologist, Marie Vandebusch said: “*Egyptian Mummies* is a unique opportunity to discover more about life and death in ancient Egypt. British Museum’s curators, scientists and conservators combined their knowledge to explore CT scan data and study objects from the museum’s vast collection, providing a unique insight into the life of six ancient individuals.”

Throughout summer there will be an extensive public program for all the family. Children can try their hand at archaeology with a 20 metre long Giant Archaeological Dig pit, which will be installed in the Powerhouse Museum amongst many other free summer school holiday activities. There will be an exciting series of talks and events including a lecture series titled *Death and Dying* that will take place throughout the duration of the exhibition and school holiday periods. There will also be curator tours and expert talks from Macquarie University and the Australian Centre for Egyptology revealing the science behind archaeological practices and CT scanning techniques. Please see website for details: <https://maas.museum>

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACTS: For interviews with British Museum visiting curators, MAAS curator of Egyptology Melanie Pitkin, and general press inquiries, please contact Claire Martin, Articulate 0414 437 588, Claire@articulatepr.com.au
Kym Elphinstone, Articulate 0421 106 139 Kym@articulatepr.com.au
Eli Wallis, MAAS 0402 359 016 eli.wallis@maas.museum

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

What: *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*

When: 10 December 2016 – 25 April 2017

Where: Powerhouse Museum, 500 Harris Street, Ultimo NSW 2007

Price: Adults \$27 Concession \$25 Children \$16 Family Pass \$65

MEDIA PREVIEW: Thursday 8 December, 11am

Images available for download here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tteuxoeurlj4mjw/AAAV9zaGFjT16g9k4b7NMgz4a?dl=0v>

About the Museum of Arts and Applied Sciences

Powerhouse Museum, alongside Sydney Observatory and Discovery Centre, is part of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), Australia’s contemporary museum for excellence and innovation in applied arts and sciences. The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences has a vast and diverse collection of over 500,000 objects.

About the British Museum

Founded in 1753, the British Museum was the first national public museum in the world. From the outset it was a museum of the world, for the world, and this idea still lies at the heart of the Museum’s mission today. The collection tells the stories of cultures across the world, from the dawn of human history, over two million years ago, to the present. Objects range from the earliest tools made by humans and treasures from the ancient world to more recent acquisitions from Africa, Oceania and the Americas, the Middle East, Asia and Europe, as well as the national collections of prints and drawings, and coins and medals. In addition to work in London, the Museum takes part in an extensive programme of loans and tours, both across the UK and throughout the world.

About CT scanning: Please note that all CT scans were performed on days that did not impact on patient use.

<http://www.britishmuseum.org>



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Meet the Mummies



Nestawedjat

Third Intermediate Period, 25th Dynasty, about 700–680 BC

Nestawedjat was a married woman belonging to a wealthy family from Thebes, a major religious centre in ancient Egypt. Her carefully mummified body is an excellent example of ancient Egyptian mummification.



Tamut

Third Intermediate Period, early 22nd Dynasty, about 900 BC

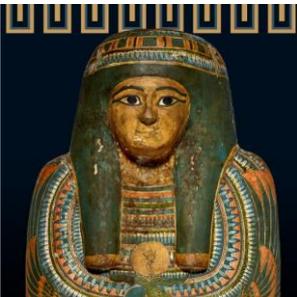
Daughter of Khonsumose, a priest of the god Amun, king of the gods. Tamut was from a high-status family and was buried with many amulets and other ritual trappings believed to have magical powers that would protect the deceased and help her to gain immortality. CT scans also show she has plaque in her arteries and suffered from arteriosclerosis.



Irthorru

Late Period, 26th Dynasty, about 600 BC

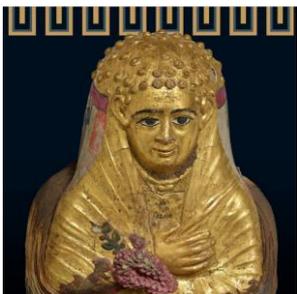
A priest from the town of Akhmim, situated about 200 km north of Thebes (modern Luxor). Several amulets were placed on his body to protect him and ensure rebirth in the afterlife. His gilded mask is gold which was thought to symbolise the skin of the gods. CT scans reveal Irthorru's dental health was very poor, with several missing teeth.



Temple Singer

Third Intermediate Period, 22nd Dynasty, around 800 BC

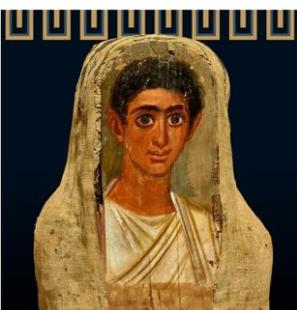
Although we do not know her name, the inscription on this woman's cartonnage case tells us that she was a priestess – more precisely a Singer of the Interior of Amun. CT scans reveal that a few amulets were found inside her abdomen and numerous small pellets – probably gold – were scattered on her body.



A young child from the Roman Period

Roman Period, about AD 40–60

In ancient Egypt few children appear to have been mummified. CT scans confirm that the boy was around two years old. His spine and ribs were damaged, possibly during mummification, but his body was wrapped with great care and placed in a gilded and finely decorated cartonnage.



A young man from Roman Egypt

Roman period, about AD 140–180

Mummification continued to be practised when Roman rulers took over Egypt in 30 BC but the techniques evolved. One major innovation was 'mummy portraits' on wooden. This mummy of a man with his lifelike portrait was among the first mummies with such an image to reach Europe.