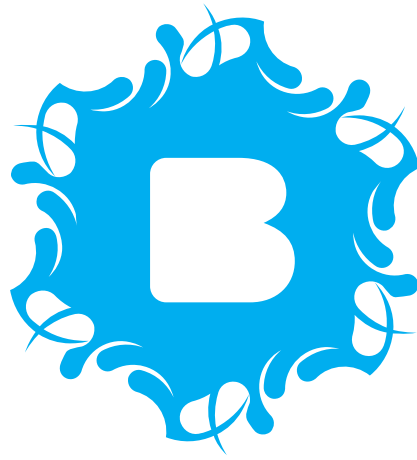


Press Release



December 2009

***The Mummy Chamber* Installation Explores Ancient Egyptian Afterlife Rituals and Beliefs Opens at Brooklyn Museum May 5, 2010**

An installation of more than 170 objects selected from the Brooklyn Museum's world-famous holdings of ancient Egyptian material explores the complex rituals related to the practice of mummification and the Egyptian belief that the body must be preserved in order to ensure eternal life. *The Mummy Chamber* will open at the Brooklyn Museum on May 5 and will remain on long-term view.

Included in the installation will be a portion of the nearly 26-foot-long papyrus *Book of the Dead of Sobekmose*, acquired in 1937 and never before on public view, which has undergone more than two years of conservation. Other segments of this extraordinary document, which contains spells to aid the dead in the afterlife, will be added to the gallery installation as they are conserved. Throughout the more than 3,000-year-old papyrus, which contains text on both sides as well as illustrations, Sobekmose's name recurs frequently, accompanied by the title "Gold-worker of Amun."

The Mummy Chamber provides a look at the Museum's collection of wrapped human and animal mummies. In addition, containers that physically protected the mummies will demonstrate the history of coffin making for humans and animals in Egypt, along with objects that illustrate the ancient Egyptians' corporal and supernatural methods for protecting the mummy from harm and for ensuring a pleasant afterlife.

On view will be the mummy of the Royal Prince, Count of Thebes, Pa-seba-khai-en-ipet, and the mummy of Hor, encased in an elaborately painted cartonnage. Also in the installation will be canopic jars used to store vital organs of a mummy, as well as several *shabtis*, small figurines placed in tombs, each of which was assigned to "work" in the afterlife. The installation will include related objects, among them stelae, reliefs, gold earrings, amulets, ritual statuettes, coffins, and mummy boards.

In recent years, several of the human and animal mummies in the Brooklyn Museum have undergone a rigorous scientific testing, including CT scanning at North Shore University Hospital, to determine new information such as the sex, age, and living habits. Some of these findings will be made available in the installation.

The presentation will examine the various processes of mummification available to ancient Egyptians' depending on the budget of the deceased. The most expensive involved the surgical removal of the brain and internal organs and an embalming process that dehydrated the body over seventy days and culminated in

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priests pouring an expensive combination of resins inside the body to preserve it—all of which was related to the religious beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. Although the internal organs were separately mummified and stored in canopic jars, the heart remained in the body, which was wrapped in linen and placed in a coffin, finally ready for the funeral service.

Portions of a recently rediscovered video of a 1958 Armstrong Circle Theater television program giving a fictionalized presentation relating to the Brooklyn Museum mummies will be a part of the installation. The program recounts an incident in the 1950s in which Museum officials, believing that mummies had no place in an art museum, attempted to get rid of some of the Brooklyn mummy holdings. Several staff members of the Brooklyn Museum have searched for a copy of the program over the past several decades, and it was only rediscovered in 2009.

The exhibition was organized by Edward Bleiberg, Curator of Egyptian Art at the Brooklyn Museum. Dr. Bleiberg also organized the related touring exhibition *To Live Forever: Art and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, on view at the Brooklyn Museum February 12 through May 2, 2010, and is also working on an exhibition of animal mummies scheduled for 2012–2013. Another related exhibition, *Body Parts: Ancient Egyptian Fragments and Amulets*, organized by Associate Curator Ekaterina Barbash, is on view through October 2, 2011.

The installation of *The Mummy Chamber* is being supported by the Leon Levy Foundation and the Museum's Charles Edwin Willbour Fund.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$10; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$6. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48.

On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.