

# Lingering Tropes and Noteworthy Narratives in Recent Archaeology Exhibitions

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On the first Monday of every month, the *American Journal of Archaeology* publishes online a list of current and upcoming exhibitions related to topics within the scope of the journal ([www.ajaonline.org/exhibits](http://www.ajaonline.org/exhibits)). Our original idea for the list was simple: to be aware of what's going on in recent exhibitions related to the subject areas of the *AJA*. It would provide information about exhibitions around the world, including their translated titles, dates, locations, curators, information about catalogues, and links to museum websites. We first published the list in December 2017. In September 2018, we started to include new museums and permanent gallery installations. The list has become more robust over time. The first installment included 46 exhibitions; as of December 2020, the list, current and archived, totals 875 exhibitions, reinstallations, and new museums. All are archived on AJA Online.<sup>1</sup>

The list is by no means exhaustive, but we have aimed to capture as many exhibitions that touch on the ancient Mediterranean and Near East as possible. We gather the exhibitions through a search of museum websites and by word of mouth; we miss some due to the limits of our knowledge and expertise. Nonetheless, the list offers a large sample of exhibitions put on by institutions of different shapes, sizes, histories, localities, and missions. It is a useful tool; it collects information about what is going on, where, when, and in what kinds of institutions. It serves people looking, in the moment, for current exhibitions and creates a record that allows researchers to assess larger trends. The list can even inform us about topics and trends in the exhibition of Mediterranean and Near Eastern antiquities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Churou Chen, Amina Hull, Zineb Sair, and Estelle Shaya who have helped me compile the list and analyze it. I am also grateful to Amélie Walker-Yung for formatting and publishing the list every month and to The College of Wooster for supporting my research. I give many thanks to Editor-in-Chief Jane B. Carter, Caitlin Clerkin, Elizabeth Greene, Elizabeth Marlowe, and Greg Shaya for commenting on a draft of this article and providing excellent suggestions, insights, and perspectives. All remaining mistakes are my own. New museums and permanent gallery installations remain on the list for six months. While some exhibitions appear on the list for multiple months, in this analysis they are only counted once.

<sup>2</sup> I do not know of a similar list of upcoming exhibitions, although the Egyptologists' Electronic Forum and the Comité International pour l'Égyptologie du Conseil International des Musées publish online lists of exhibitions that focus on ancient Egypt. Lists of upcoming exhibitions exist for many cities and countries, but they are not focused on a particular time or region.

This survey takes stock of the years leading up to 2021. Using the list as a starting point and then surveying notable exhibitions, it tells two stories. The first, which is short, centers on exhibition titles. It has to do with lingering tropes, with an image of archaeology in which pharaohs and treasures loom large. The second story—and here there is much more to say—points to noteworthy narratives. It centers on exhibited histories of collecting, museums, and fieldwork, along with shows that bring ancient objects together with works by contemporary artists. This story has to do with multilayered histories of objects, with questions of provenance, heritage, and representation in its leading roles. What follows is an overview rather than a deep dive. I first offer a brief survey of titles that points to the residual power of stodgy tropes. I then turn to a series of examples that resonate with one another and highlight ways in which exhibitions have been exploring the roles of museums as sites of collection, fragmentation, preservation, and decontextualization.

#### EXHIBITION TITLES AND LINGERING TROPES

The list on AJA Online offers a snapshot of recent exhibitions related to the content of the *AJA*. First, some numbers: as of December 2020, the list, current plus archived entries, totals 875 exhibitions from 446 museums from 46 countries. It gives websites for all the exhibitions; catalogue information is available for 207 of them (24%). Almost all of the exhibitions contain antiquities or materials produced through archaeological research. The exceptions focus on contemporary art that engages with relationships between antiquity and the present, about which more below.

Currently, the list is very much about European and American exhibitions. Despite our efforts to broaden it, the great majority of exhibitions that we have found were in Europe (72%) and the United States (17%). Italy tops the list with 168 exhibitions (19%). Other well-represented countries are Germany (12%), the United Kingdom (9%), France (8%), Spain (7%), Greece (4%), and the Netherlands (3%). The list includes exhibitions in the Middle East (4%), Asia and Oceania (4%), the Americas outside the United States (2.5%), and Africa (0.5%). Exhibitions were spread among institutions that identify themselves as national museums (27%), civic museums (26.5%), foundations (22.5%, with 11.5% public and 11% private), universities (11%), site museums (4.5%), exhibition spaces (4.5%), research centers (2%), religious institutions (1%), and libraries (1%). The list includes 13 recently

opened museums.<sup>3</sup> While to a degree these numbers reflect our knowledge and access to information, they also reflect broad patterns in the exhibition of Mediterranean and Near Eastern antiquities.

A textual analysis of common words across the titles reveals further patterns. But first a caveat—this kind of analysis is inherently reductive; it provides no details about individual exhibitions and their visitors, themes, and institutional and social contexts. But it is also true that titles are important, and patterns that run across a large number of them reveal something about marketing. A good title captures the essence of an exhibition—it tells potential visitors what an exhibition is about and what they can expect to see. For this reason, titles shape who goes to an exhibition and how they remember it.

The appendix included here lays out the most common words across the titles and their frequency. It also breaks down the titles geographically to show differences between Europe and the United States.<sup>4</sup> Common words reveal where the emphasis has been. For instance, the most common place names and adjectives point to Egypt, Rome, Greece, Pompeii, Etruria, the Mediterranean, Arabia, and Jerusalem. The most common words for human and divine actors are “pharaoh,” “gods,” “Tutankhamun,” “kings,” and “heroes.” The most common words for things a visitor might see are “art,” “antiquities,” “treasures,” “mummies,” “photographs,” “gold,” “coins,” and “animals.” Titles promise “histories,” “myths,” “stories,” “discoveries,” and “journeys.” “Empire” ranks 18th among the most common words. The absences are also suggestive. For instance,

<sup>3</sup>New museums include the Archaeological Museum of Messara, Greece (2020); Museo Archeologico di Castellammare di Stabia, Italy (2020); James-Simon-Galerie, Germany (2019); Museu Tutankhamon, Brazil (2019); Petra Museum, Jordan (2019), with review by Green (2020); Musée de la Romanité, France (2018), with review by Cassibry (2020); Troy Museum, Turkey (2018); Antiquarium of the Herculaneum Archaeological Park, Italy (2018); Louvre Abu-Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (2017); Mersin Archaeological Museum, Turkey (2017); National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, Egypt (2017); and Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah in Ferrara, Italy (2017). Openings that came to our attention after December 2020 include the Hurghada Museum, Egypt (2020), the Sharm El-Sheikh National Museum, Egypt (2020), and the Kafr El-Sheikh Museum, Egypt (2020).

<sup>4</sup>For this type of study of trends, compare recent initiatives to review authorship in archaeological journals, e.g., Heath-Stout 2020.

“race,” “ethnicity,” “diversity,” “slavery,” and “colonialism” do not appear on the list.

When we sort the titles by geography, further patterns emerge. For instance, while it is remarkable that “mummies” ranks 12th among the most common words in the titles, it is even more remarkable that it ranks sixth in titles from the United States, 20th in Europe. “Mummy” also frequently appears in titles from countries where we have found few examples of exhibitions of Mediterranean antiquities, such as Taiwan and China. While “archaeology” is the second most common word in titles from Europe, it appears only once in titles from the United States. Likewise, “classical” ranks ninth among the common words in titles from the United States, while it is not among the common words in titles from Europe.

Word analysis thus suggests that in the years leading up to 2021, at least some museums have still been trading in images and dreams of mummies, treasures, and gold. These old-fashioned stereotypes are not yet banished.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, a title is not the measure of an exhibition. Titles are ways to attract audiences and make content recognizable. Borrowing time-tested tropes is one way that marketers do that (and in doing so, they also reinforce the tropes). Such titles speak to images from popular culture as well.<sup>6</sup> And of course, titles mean different things in different contexts and to different audiences. An exhibition on Trajan and the Roman empire means something quite different in Rome than it would in New York.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the persistence of words like mummies, treasures, and gold across the titles is remarkable, especially since scholars have been saying for decades that we need to understand collections of antiquities in terms of movement, hierarchies, colonialism, and power. For archaeologists and curators who take seriously the challenges of narratives of Western civilization and the problem of how to decolonize the museum, the titles pose questions to grapple with: what does it say about Mediterranean and Near Eastern ar-

chaeology that so many popular exhibitions are about pharaonic Egypt? How can exhibitions decenter classical narratives that lead from Greece and Rome to the present? What are the histories and present-day stakes inherent in tales of discovery, treasures, and gold? How should exhibitions treat human bodies that have been collected and scrutinized?

#### NOTEWORTHY DIRECTIONS

The tale of musty titles is not the only story here. Another points to recent dynamic presentations of antiquities. Of course, one can tell many stories when drawing on a list of 875 exhibitions, and this short survey cannot account for everything happening in the exhibition of antiquities leading up to 2021. One could, for instance, focus on exhibitions that have put ancient cultures side by side, that have examined trans-regional movements, trade routes, and the circulation of peoples and things, or that have placed the ancient Mediterranean within larger temporal or geographic frames.<sup>8</sup> Or one could tell of exhibitions that have explored transhistorical and transcultural themes such as illness, healing, love, warfare, or the divine.<sup>9</sup> Or one could highlight exhibitions that have introduced audiences to recent archaeological discoveries or scientific revolutions going on in the study of museum objects.<sup>10</sup>

This overview, by contrast, foregrounds exhibitions that have examined the roles of collectors, museums, and archaeology in the making, preservation,

<sup>8</sup> E.g., *The Sogdians: Influencers on the Silk Road*, a virtual exhibition put on by the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (2019), examined the role of an ancient merchant society in the movement of goods and ideas in Central Asia, China, and beyond. Other examples include *China und Ägypten. Wiegen der Welt* at the Neues Museum in Berlin (2017); *Scythians: Warriors of Ancient Siberia*, British Museum, London (2017–18), with review by Johnson (2018); and *Ancient Mediterranean Cultures in Contact*, The Field Museum, Chicago (2017–18).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., *Imagining the Divine: Art and the Rise of World Religions* at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (2017–18); *Bewegte Zeiten: Archäologie in Deutschland*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2018–19), with review by Lehmann (2019); and *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place* at the Bard Graduate Center, New York (2018).

<sup>10</sup> E.g., *I possi delle meraviglie: Nuove scoperte a Cetamura del Chianti* at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze (2017), with a review by Tuck (2018); *Egypt's Sunken Cities*, Minneapolis Institute of Art (2018–19); and *Urban Biographies, Ancient and Modern* (2018–19), Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor, with review by Bernard (2019).

<sup>5</sup> For the exhibition of mummies, see Riggs 2014; for hyper-real museum representations of Egypt, see Riggs 2010; Stevenson 2015; for exhibitions about “treasures,” “splendors,” and “gold,” see Barker 1999, 128.

<sup>6</sup> The Internet Movie Database, e.g., lists twice as many movies with “mummy” in the title or description as “archaeologist” or “archaeology.”

<sup>7</sup> *Traiano: Costruire l'Impero, Creare l'Europa*, Museo dei Fori Imperiali, Rome (2017–18), with review by Hartnett (2018).

and destruction of heritage. These exhibitions bring audiences into conversations about multiple layers of meaning around artifacts—digging into the museum's past, asking questions about how objects were excavated or acquired, how they made their ways into museums, and how they have been preserved, studied, and displayed. Some have gone further, expanding their narratives by bringing in voices of artists who engage in conversations with objects across time, especially concerning questions of representation, power, and heritage. Such shows figure prominently in the list of current and upcoming exhibitions. When taken together, they highlight an important curatorial trend toward transparency, self-reflection, and the examination of historical practices. They offer fuller stories of objects and the networks of relationships in which they are embedded—stories of the sort that reviews published in this journal and elsewhere have called upon museums to tell.<sup>11</sup> Such exhibitions deserve a close look.

By way of preface, I note that I have not seen the exhibitions discussed below in person. I know them through catalogues, websites, press releases, reviews, online lectures and tours, films, photographs, blog posts, conference presentations, and interviews with artists and curators. The exhibitions are scattered across many countries. Even before the shutdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would have been nearly impossible to see them all in person, but thanks to the strides many museums have made toward online access—strides that have greatly accelerated with the COVID-19 situation—much information about these shows is available.<sup>12</sup> What follows, then, is not a review but rather an overview along with some modest reflections. It focuses on exhibitions of different sizes from a variety of institutions. By necessity, it does not speak to direct encounters with objects or galleries. Rather, it surveys topics that, although quite different from one another, when taken together tell a story about the complexities of museums and their legacies today.

#### HISTORIES OF COLLECTING AND MUSEUMS

Some recent shows have focused on the lives of collectors, their collecting visions, and the dispersal of

cultural heritage.<sup>13</sup> They offer accounts of the acquisition of objects, the ideas and dreams that collections have embodied, the creation of systems of classification and display, and the ways in which collections have come apart and their pieces scattered. For example, *Un rêve d'Italie. La collection du marquis Campana* at the Musée du Louvre (2018–19), the Capitoline Museums (2019), and the State Hermitage Museum (2019), brought together more than 500 works collected by Giovanni Pietro Campana, Marchese di Cavelli (1808/9–1880) (fig. 1).<sup>14</sup> Well before Italian unification, between the 1830s and 1850s, Campana amassed an enormous collection of Italian antiquities and later sculpture, with more than 12,000 archaeological objects, paintings, ceramics, and works of the decorative arts collected from his own excavations and from antiquities and art markets. While Campana's motivations for collecting are not easy to discern—he left no texts explaining them—his collection's structure as detailed by its catalogues suggests that it embodied a nationalist vision of Italian cultural heritage at a time leading up to the creation of the modern Italian state. The collection, however, did not last. Convicted in 1857 of embezzling funds from the Monte di Pietà to finance his collecting obsession, Campana was forced into exile, and the Papal States auctioned off his collected objects. Most went to museums in Paris, St. Petersburg, and London, where they came to embody French, Russian, and British “dreams of Italy”—dreams that reflected different national alignments with Italian history and culture.<sup>15</sup>

Other exhibitions have examined the histories of museums, especially with an eye toward biographies of collectors, changing collecting practices, and shifts in exhibition narratives and displays.<sup>16</sup> *Excavating*

<sup>13</sup> E.g., *Gemme Antiche dei Medici e dei Lorena*, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze (2018); *Domus Grimani 1594–2019: La collezione di Sculture classiche a Palazzo dopo quattro secoli*, Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Venice (2019); and *The Torlonia Marbles. Collecting Masterpieces*, Musei Capitolini a Palazzo Caffarelli, Rome (2020–21).

<sup>14</sup> Gaultier et al. 2018; Zutter 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Gaultier et al. 2018, 20–21.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., *Musée archéologique mode d'emploi: La vie mouvementée des collections*, Musée Archéologique Strasbourg (2019–20); *We Start Here: The Oriental Institute at 100*, The Oriental Institute, Chicago (2019–20); *Klartext: Zur Geschichte des Bode-Museums*, Bode-Museum, Berlin (2020); and *Making The Met, 1870–2020*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2020), with review by Macaulay-Lewis (2021).

<sup>11</sup> See calls for fuller stories of objects published in reviews in this journal: Shaya 2018; Marlowe 2020; Macaulay-Lewis 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Clerkin and Taylor 2021.



FIG. 1. Gallery view of *Un rêve d'Italie. La collection du marquis Campana* with Campana Plaques, ca. 530 BCE (Paris, Musée du Louvre Cp 6625, Cp6624, Cp 6626, Cp 6628, Cp 6627) and Sarcophagus of the Spouses, ca. 520–510 BCE (Louvre Cp 5194), discovered probably 1845–46 at Cerveteri, Banditaccia Necropolis (© Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines, 2018).

*Archaeology @ U-M: 1817–2017* (2017–18), a joint exhibition put on by the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology (UMMAA) and the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, for instance, placed the history of collecting at two institutions that arose from different academic traditions side by side. While the UMMAA holds a collection rooted in natural history collecting, colonialism, and the beginnings of the discipline of anthropology, the Kelsey's collection has its origins in classics and biblical studies.<sup>17</sup> The exhibition followed the history of the two museums by tracing accounts of scholars, fieldwork, and acquisitions and by examining the roles of archaeological research and collections in the production and accumulation of knowledge. Acquisitions and field projects filled the museums with tens of thousands of artifacts. The different collections amassed over time reflect shifting paradigms; they tell a story of the movement of both museums and disciplines toward increasingly

scientific archaeological practices and greater ethical and political awareness.

Objects acquire powerful resonances through their life histories. In the last decade, notable exhibitions have centered on the search for and return of artworks, especially those illegally expropriated during World War II.<sup>18</sup> An example that focused on the fate of Mediterranean antiquities and their owner is *Ludwig Pollak. Archeologo e mercante d'arte* (Praga 1868–Auschwitz 1943). *Gli anni d'oro del collezionismo internazionale da Giovanni Barracco a Sigmund Freud* (2018–19) at the Museo di Scultura Antica Giovanni Barracco and the Museo Ebraico di Roma. The exhibition offered an account of the life and tragic death of Ludwig Pollak, best known today for the discovery of the Vatican Laocoön's arm and the identification of the Athena from the Marsyas group now in Frankfurt's

<sup>17</sup> Exhibition website: <https://exhibitions.kelsey.lsa.umich.edu/excavating-archaeology-bicentennial/>.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., *Gurlitt Status Report* in the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, and Kunstmuseum, Bern (2017–18); *Discriminating Thieves: Nazi-Looted Art and Restitution*, Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City (2019); and *Concealed Histories: Uncovering the Story of Nazi Looting*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2019–21).

Liebighaus.<sup>19</sup> As an expert in classical art—a mark of high culture—Pollak traveled in international circles of elite collectors and intellectuals (Carl Jacobsen, John Pierpont Morgan, Gregorio Stroganoff, Sigmund Freud, Giovanni Barracco, and many more), helping them build collections that are now in museums around the world (including the Museo di Scultura Antica Giovanni Barracco where part of the exhibition took place). Later in life, Pollak could not escape the horrors of his times. Progressively isolated as a Jew, banned from the Hertziana library, he began liquidating his private collections at bargain prices, especially in auctions in 1942 and 1943. Soon after, he and his family were deported and murdered at Auschwitz. His sister-in-law—and only surviving heir—donated his archive and library to the Municipality of Rome along with works that remained in his collection, such as a portrait head of Claudius now in the Museo della Centrale Montemartini.<sup>20</sup> While the exhibition did not explore the fate of such objects in depth, it raised questions about what it means to see antiquities and collections through the lens of the Holocaust.

An associated group of recent exhibitions has explored the effects of war and political turmoil on museums and archaeological heritage as well as efforts to protect antiquities.<sup>21</sup> Most have featured recent examples, but some look farther back in time.<sup>22</sup> *Arqueologia a l'exili. El Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya i la Guerra Civil espanyola (1936–1939)* (2019) at the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya, examined the museum's efforts to save Catalan heritage from looting

and attacks unleashed by the outbreak of Spanish Civil War in 1936.<sup>23</sup> The show emphasized dangers that heroic individuals faced to safeguard archaeological objects and works of art. Curators packed and sheltered smaller objects and put sandbags around heavy ones such as the Hellenistic sculpture of Aesculapius excavated in 1909 at Empúries (fig. 2). When the bombing of Barcelona became intense in March 1938, they evacuated the collection, first to Max Perxés d'Agullana (Alt Empordà) and then, under bombs and along roads full of people fleeing into exile, to France. From there, a train brought the collections to Geneva where they came under the protection of the League of Nations until the victorious fascist government claimed ownership, demanded their return, and purged the museum workers, some of whom, including the museum's director, Bosch i Gimpera, fled into exile.

The antiquities market feeds the destruction of cultural heritage; some recent exhibitions have dealt with the return of looted artifacts and smuggling networks involved in the trade in antiquities.<sup>24</sup> *Colori degli Etruschi. Tesori di terracotta alla Centrale Montemartini* (Rome, 2019–20) examined Etruscan painted terracotta plaques rescued from antiquities dealers, together with efforts to curtail smuggling and repatriate cultural heritage.<sup>25</sup> The exhibition featured more than 1,000 painted terracotta tiles recovered by the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in 2016 (fig. 3). The Carabinieri seized the tiles from warehouses in the Geneva free port where a dealer had stashed 45 crates of antiquities illegally exported from Italy in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>26</sup> The exhibition also included painted terracotta fragments and other antiquities returned to Italy in 2016 by collectors and museums, as well as objects on loan from museums.<sup>27</sup> Taken together, the materials shed light on the creation

<sup>19</sup> Rossini 2018. See also *Spuren der NS-Verfolgung. Provenienzforschung in den kulturhistorischen Sammlungen der Landeshauptstadt Hannover*, Museum August Kestner, Hanover (2018–19).

<sup>20</sup> Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini MC 2443. The portrait originally surfaced on the antiquities market.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., *Cultures in the Crossfire: Stories from Syria and Iraq*, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia (2017–18), with review by Rafii (2019); *Kulturlandschaft Syrien. Bewahren und Archivieren in Zeiten des Krieges*, Pergamonmuseum, Berlin (2018–19); and *Cités millénaires. Voyage virtuel de Palmyre à Mossoul*, Institut du monde arabe, Paris (2018–19). Some exhibitions have included sections on the destruction of cultural heritage, e.g., *The World Between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2019), with review by Nagel (2020).

<sup>22</sup> E.g., *Hercules alla Guerra*, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (2018–19).

<sup>23</sup> Boya and Casanovas Romeu 2019.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., *L'Arte Ritrovata. L'impegno dell'Arma dei Carabinieri per il recupero e la salvaguardia del nostro Patrimonio Culturale*, Musei Capitolini, Rome (2019–20); *Recovered Treasures*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (2018); *MitoMania: Storie ritrovate di uomini ed eroi*, Museo archeologico nazionale di Taranto (2019); *Gestohlene Vergangenheit-verlorene Zukunft*, Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe (2020); and *Luchando contra el expolio*, Museo Arqueológico de Murcia (2020).

<sup>25</sup> Agnoli et al. 2019. Here the word “tesori” in the title evokes plunder as well as value.

<sup>26</sup> Agnoli et al. 2019, 47.

<sup>27</sup> Agnoli et al. 2019, 55.



FIG. 2. Photograph from *Arqueologia a l'exili. El Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya i la Guerra Civil espanyola (1936–1939)* showing interior of the Empúries Room with the statue of Aesculapius protected by sandbags, late 1937–early 1938 (Aesculapius: Empúries, Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya MAC EMP-11530/11532, excav. 1909; photograph attrib. R. Sagarra MAC AHF no. CC158).

and use of terracotta plaques in antiquity as well as the legal, diplomatic, and scholarly labor involved in the recovery and repatriation of cultural heritage.<sup>28</sup>

#### MUSEUMS AND FIELDWORK

While the above exhibitions focused on collecting, museums, and the protection of cultural property, others have looked at the contexts and politics of archaeological fieldwork and the ways in which its hierarchies continue to resonate in museums. As Stevenson's 2019 book *Scattered Finds* shows, there is much to be gained by moving back and forth between the field and the museum; actions in one sphere have consequences in the other. This is true both in archaeological work today and in the study of its history. Because looting, warfare, and environmental destruction all harm field sites, archaeological collections are all the more important. Museums are not apart from these dangers but are connected to them in broader histories and networks. Both museums and fieldwork need to be seen in the wider context of world events. As stewards of archaeological collections, museums

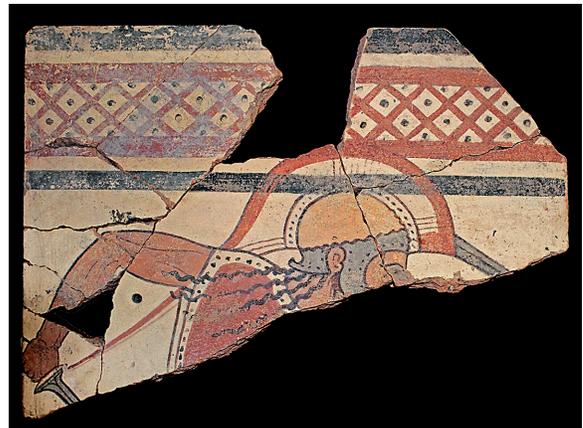


FIG. 3. Fragments of a painted tile in *Colori degli Etruschi: Tesori di terracotta alla Centrale Montemartini*, looted from Cerveteri in 1984 and recovered from Geneva free port (inv. no. 115541) (© Ministry of Culture, Italy; permission Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la provincia di Viterbo e per l'Etruria Meridionale).

have a responsibility to tell multilayered accounts of their archaeological materials.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Turfa 2021.

<sup>29</sup>Stevenson 2019, 253–56.

Some recent exhibitions have cast light on the role of excavations in colonial systems of power—systems that led to the acquisition of many museum objects. They have examined hierarchies embedded in fieldwork, especially during archaeological campaigns in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They present archaeology as a practice, displaying materials excavations have created or collected—photographs, drawings, reconstructions, models, biological specimens, publications—and using them to explore complicated cultural relations embedded in excavation, collecting, and research. *Photographing Tutankhamun* (2018), a small exhibition held first at The Collection in Lincoln and then the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge, for instance, centered on digital scans of Harry Burton's glass plate negatives taken during the excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb as well as the newspapers and publicity materials in which the images appeared.<sup>30</sup> The exhibition showed that archaeological photographs are steeped in the ideologies of those who created them. Images from the field betray much about the colonial context of the excavations, with shots of workers who are largely invisible in scholarly publications—Egyptian archaeologists, workmen moving crates of objects from the Valley of the Kings to Luxor, and children doing heavy labor (fig. 4). The exhibition also explored the wider context of racism that shaped interactions between the archaeologists and the Egyptians as well as their treatment of human remains. Burton photographed Tutankhamun's head, for instance, cut from the king's body and propped on a paintbrush handle, according to contemporary photographic conventions used for racial and criminal exemplification.<sup>31</sup>

Archaeological research and its collections are rooted in particular historical moments that can have a long impact on how those collections are viewed or if they are viewed at all. What and who museums do and do not display bears on fundamental questions of

what constitutes the past and who has power to articulate these representations.<sup>32</sup> The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, took an important step forward in looking at racist interpretations of archaeological collections in *Ancient Nubia Now* (2019–20).<sup>33</sup> The museum has one of the world's largest collections of Nubian objects, produced through early 20th-century excavations led by Harvard archaeologist George Reisner. *Ancient Nubia Now* not only introduced visitors to this important material but also addressed questions of how racial prejudices led Reisner to misinterpret his findings and dismiss the significance and sophistication of Nubian culture. The exhibition questioned the museum's role as a steward of the collection which it has displayed only rarely until the museum's recent reengagement with it. The show is part of the museum's new effort to highlight the material and put Nubia back in its rightful place as a powerful gateway between Sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt, and the Mediterranean.

Other exhibitions have traced transnational movements of objects from the field to the museum with an eye to the wider social and political contexts in which these objects traveled. *Assyria to America* (2019–21) at Bowdoin College Museum of Art, for instance, told the story of Austen Henry Layard's excavation (1845–51) of the palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) at Nimrud and the ways its huge stone reliefs were removed from the site and shipped down the Tigris River and across oceans.<sup>34</sup> Many of the reliefs came to the United States and can now be found in museums across the country. *Assyria to America* explored the ancient artifacts, their modern excavation, the shipment of five reliefs to a small liberal arts college in Brunswick, Maine, and their contemporary meanings. Toward that end, it juxtaposed ancient and contemporary art, featuring works by the artist Michael Rakowitz whose project *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist* mourns the violent impact of war on communities and

<sup>30</sup> The project led to a blog and a book: <https://photographing-tutankhamun.com> and Riggs 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Riggs 2020, 125–40. Regarding racial classification and mummies, see also Riggs 2010, 1146–49. Other exhibitions have used the archival materials that excavations create to explore social relationships embedded in the practices of excavation, documentation, and research. *Shattering Perceptions: The Women of Archaeology*, at the Museum of Archaeology at Durham University (2018), for instance, investigated questions of gender in archaeological research while showcasing contributions of women to archaeology from the 19th century to today.

<sup>32</sup> For another example of the impact of collecting and storage on the interpretation of objects and communities, see *No Offense: Exploring LGBTQ+ Histories*, at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (2018), an exhibition that explored the long-lived, global nature of LGBTQ+ histories and showcased many objects from the British Museum that were available for the first time for public viewing.

<sup>33</sup> See the review by Emberling (2020).

<sup>34</sup> Exhibition website: [www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/exhibitions/2019/assyria-to-america.html](http://www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/exhibitions/2019/assyria-to-america.html); exhibition labels: [www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/pdf/assyria-america-final-labels.pdf](http://www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/pdf/assyria-america-final-labels.pdf).



FIG. 4. Photograph possibly by Howard Carter, 27 or 28 February 1923. The label in the exhibition *Photographing Tutankhamun* read: “Howard Carter gets the credit for discovering Tutankhamun’s tomb. But Egyptians, including children, did much of the work. Dozens of boys, and some girls, carried rubble to backfill the tomb at the end of the first season. The tall man supervising in the shade at top left may be Ahmed Gerigar, senior foreman (*ra’is*, in Arabic)” (© Griffith Institute, University of Oxford).

their daily lives as well as their cultural heritage.<sup>35</sup> Rakowitz uses Middle Eastern food-packing labels and materials to make replicas of the artifacts looted and still missing from the National Museum of Iraq after the United States invasion as well as the sculpture that once lined the palace at Nimrud but has been destroyed by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and artifacts that have been looted or destroyed in the civil war in Syria. His work belongs to a wider trend examined further below.

#### CONTEMPORARY ART, ARCHAEOLOGY, AND MUSEUMS

While these exhibitions have explored museums, fieldwork, and the spaces in between, many have also brought ancient objects together with contemporary art to ask about relationships between the past and the

present—and about the meanings of those relationships and how they are mediated. In these exhibitions, artists have addressed pressing questions in museums today about provenance, tradition, and representation. Many of these exhibitions also include objects from the ancient Mediterranean and related areas.

Some exhibitions, for instance, have invited viewers into conversations about authenticity, restoration, and preservation.<sup>36</sup> They grapple with the fragmentary and dispersed state of much ancient material. *Patricia Cronin, Aphrodite, and the Lure of Antiquity: Conversations with the Collection* (2018–19) at the Tampa Museum of Art, for example, centered on Cronin’s engagement with the museum’s Roman first-century CE marble torso of Aphrodite.<sup>37</sup> The torso has a tangled history. After its discovery in the late 18th century, a restorer joined it with a head from a later Aphrodite statue. The

<sup>35</sup> See [www.michaelrakowitz.com/the-invisible-enemy-should-not-exist](http://www.michaelrakowitz.com/the-invisible-enemy-should-not-exist). Rakowitz has exhibited parts of this project at other museums that have reliefs from Nimrud including Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown; the Oriental Institute, Chicago; and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., *Restoring the Minoans: Elizabeth Price and Sir Arthur Evans*, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York (2017–18) and *Lily Cox-Richard: She-Wolf + Lower Figs*, Blanton Museum of Art, Austin (2019).

<sup>37</sup> See *Patricia Cronin, Aphrodite, and the Lure of Antiquity: Conversations with the Collection*, forthcoming, and [www.patriciacronin.net/exhibitions.html](http://www.patriciacronin.net/exhibitions.html).

two pieces remained together as one statue until 1934, when an art dealer separated them again and sold them individually. A taste for pure ancient sculptures (even if fragmentary) had replaced the earlier preference for composite ones. The Tampa Museum of Art purchased the torso in 1986 and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art acquired the head as a gift from Wright S. Ludington in 1978.<sup>38</sup> Based on the two fragments, Cronin created an over-life-sized cold-cast marble and translucent aquamarine resin statue of the goddess, entitled *Aphrodite Reimagined*.<sup>39</sup> The exhibition juxtaposed the Tampa torso and the Santa Barbara head with the maquette of Cronin's statue. Cronin's ghostly painted silhouettes of famous ancient Aphrodite statues housed in world-renowned museums framed these objects (fig. 5). Taken together, the artworks highlighted the mutability and dispersal of the goddess' images across time as well as their persistent lure.

Exhibitions often examine ways in which artists have engaged with ancient forms, stories, and figures.<sup>40</sup> Wangechi Mutu's facade commission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (The Met), *The New Ones, will free Us* (2019–20), was a powerful display that asked questions about representation. Mutu's work featured four bronze female figures placed in the niches of The Met's 1902 neoclassical facade (fig. 6).<sup>41</sup> The figures, draped in heavy coil robes, were inspired by African and Greek caryatids, yet they reversed the very idea of the caryatid: they bore no weight and instead, as figures with agency and power, they sat unencumbered, asserting their freedom from the tradition embodied in the museum's classicizing exterior and much of the collection within.

Exhibitions that bring the ancient together with the modern have a long history, especially in art museums. What is also notable now is the dialogue in museums between contemporary artists and archaeological artifacts and methods. Among the best-known artists involved in this conversation are Damien Hirst and Ai

Wei Wei. A provocative example is Hirst's *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* (a title that evokes familiar tropes), exhibited at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Over an area of perhaps 5,000 square meters, Hirst documented the story and presented artifacts from the imaginary wreck of a fictitious Roman ship, the *Unbelievable (Apistos)*, set some 2,000 years ago off the coast of east Africa.<sup>42</sup> Hirst's divers/archaeologists are shown salvaging the ship's ancient-looking cargo—a spectacular assortment of pharaohs, mythical beasts, gods, heroes, and treasures created by Hirst but said to have been assembled in antiquity by an obsessive collector from Antioch named Cif Amotan II (an anagram for “I am fiction”). Hirst “restored,” drew, catalogued, and interpreted the eye-popping finds. Their museum display and pseudo-scholarly assessments contrasted with the reality of a collection of contemporary art produced for sale at high prices. The project spoke the language of archaeology, museums, and collecting to reflect on contemporary consumerism and the art market. In doing so, it fell back on old paradigms of treasure hunting, colonial exploitation, and the appropriation of antiquities for Western museums.

Other artists are exploring the ambivalent roles of museums in the making, preservation, and destruction of heritage. *Anche le statue muoiono. Conflitto e patrimonio tra antico e contemporaneo* (2018–19) at the Museo Egizio, Musei Reali, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, for instance, placed works by artists, many from countries where war has recently put heritage at risk, in dialogue with ancient objects in order to examine motivations for the destruction of cultural heritage in antiquity and today. In one gallery, the exhibition juxtaposed a defaced New Kingdom statue of Hapu, priest of Amon (1482–1458 BCE), with a contemporary performance piece (fig. 7).<sup>43</sup> The statue suffered *damnatio memoriae* in antiquity: the name of the god Amon and all plural forms of “divinity” in its inscription were erased during the Amarna period and reengraved afterward. In the same gallery, Kader Attia's *Arab Spring, 2014* recalled the looted vitrines of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo in 2011.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Torso: Tampa Museum of Art 1986.134, acq. 1986; head: Santa Barbara Museum of Art 1978.4.9, acq. 1978. For the provenance history of these works, see Pevnick forthcoming.

<sup>39</sup> Tampa Museum of Art 2021.001.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., *Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece*, British Museum, London (2018); *The Classical Now*, Kings College, London (2018); and *Hymn to Apollo: The Ancient World and the Ballets Russes*, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York (2019).

<sup>41</sup> See [www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2019/facade-commission-wangechi-mutu](http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2019/facade-commission-wangechi-mutu).

<sup>42</sup> Hirst et al. 2017, with review by Greene and Leidwanger (2018). Material from the exhibition has recently been on display in the exhibition *Damien Hirst, Archaeology Now* at the Galleria Borghese, Rome (2021).

<sup>43</sup> On the Hapu figure, see Ciccopiedi 2018, 100, no. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Ciccopiedi 2018, with review by Settimini (2018). *Arab Spring, 2014*: <http://kaderattia.de/arab-spring/>.



FIG. 5. Installation view of Patricia Cronin, *Aphrodite, and the Lure of Antiquity: Conversations with the Collection* (courtesy Tampa Museum of Art).



FIG. 6. Wangechi Mutu, *The Seated IV*, 2019, bronze, from *The NewOnes, will free Us*, on the facade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (A. Rosenfeld; Getty Images).

During the piece, Attia shattered museum cases with bricks and stones, reflecting the fragility of museum objects, the abuse of cultural patrimony, and the ways

in which museums and archaeological collections have served as part of the technology of colonialism. Put together, *Arab Spring, 2014* and the statue of Hapu resonated with the history of Egyptian archaeology and museum collections; they also spoke of the power of iconoclasm in challenging systems of authority and creating cultural, political, and religious realignments.

Other exhibitions have highlighted the complicated ways in which ancient works from the non-Western world have entered museums in Europe and the United States and have brought with them ghosts of colonial despoilment. *Rayyane Tabat: Alien Property* at The Met offered a multifaceted narrative of the dispersal of artifacts from Tell Halaf (ancient Guzana) in Syria: in the early 20th century, the German baron Max von Oppenheim, along with hundreds of local workmen, excavated Tell Halaf. He transported the lion's share of the finds to Berlin beginning in 1914, but a British naval ship intercepted the first shipment and seized the 31 crates of antiquities as enemy property, and this material was subsequently sold to the British Museum. Another shipment in the late 1920s brought a new cargo of antiquities to Berlin, while 34 reliefs remained in Syria and two were donated to the Louvre.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Benzel et al. 2019, 1–16.



FIG. 7. Installation view of Kader Attia, *Arab Spring*, 2014, along with a statue of Hapu, third lector priest of Amon (1482–1458 BCE; Turin, Museo Egizio 3061, acq. before 1882), from *Anche le statue muoiono. Conflitto e patrimonio tra antico e contemporaneo* at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (G. Perottino).

The fragmentation continued. In 1930, von Oppenheim opened the Tell Halaf Museum in Berlin. The following year, he brought eight orthostats to New York, probably with the intention of selling them, but, unable to do so, he left them in storage. In 1943, the Allies bombed Berlin, including the new Tell Halaf Museum, reducing it—and its contents—to rubble (an example of the dangers of stewardship in Western museums). Meanwhile, the U.S. government confiscated the eight orthostats in New York as enemy property and sold them to The Met, which in turn, sold four reliefs to the Walters Art Museum. The Met's exhibition brought the museum's reliefs together with archival materials, a recently reconstructed Neo-Hittite statue from the bombed Tell Halaf Museum (fig. 8), and works by the artist Rayanne Tabet, whose great grandfather, Faik Borkhoche, served as von Oppenheim's secretary during the excavations.<sup>46</sup> Tabet's work

<sup>46</sup> Neo-Hittite statue of a seated figure: Cologne, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim-Stiftung (on loan to the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin) TH B 1, excav. 1912, reconstructed 2001–09.

places his family's story into the history of the reliefs. The exhibition included his unfinished *Orthostates*, a series of charcoal rubbings of surviving reliefs now scattered in museums in Berlin, Paris, London, New York, Baltimore, Aleppo, and Dier ez-Zor (fig. 9).<sup>47</sup> In presenting these traces of the past, Tabet invites viewers into conversations about access to cultural heritage mediated through museums.

A final example, the site-specific exhibition *SIGHT* (2019) by Anthony Gormley, called attention to the long intersection of human and natural landscapes. Presented by the NEON Foundation in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, the exhibition took place at the archaeological site and

<sup>47</sup> Benzel et al. 2019, 18–33, 35–47. In 2019, The Met's Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Department of Modern and Contemporary Art jointly acquired 32 pieces from *Orthostates* (2019.288.1–32). The work includes an index with the current locations of the dispersed reliefs, with some marked as "Lost" or "Destroyed." For Tabet's continued engagement with von Oppenheim's excavations see *Rayanne Tabet Archive*: <https://archive.rayyanetabet.com/Browse/Works>.



FIG. 8. Installation view of *Rayyane Tabet Alien Property* (2019–21) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with basalt statue of a seated figure from Tell Halaf (Max Freiherr von Oppenheim-Stiftung; excav. 1912, see n. 46) (A.-M. Kellen; courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art).

museum on the island of Delos. Gormley placed 29 iron figures in sites that activated the island's geologic and human topographies and timeframes (fig. 10).<sup>48</sup> Standing at the water's edge, on geological features, among the archaeological remains, and in the museum, the body-forms animated the transhistorical palimpsest that is the island. Although the body-forms have formal affinities with archaic kouroi, they come from a different world. Realistic, cast in iron, rusty, and industrial, they offered no stories. Rather, as emblems of the space in which the human body exists, these figures resonated with the sea, the rocks, the ancient statues, and the stone blocks resurrected by archaeologists.

<sup>48</sup> Gormley 2019; [www.antonygormley.com/show/item-view/id/2562/type/solo#p1](http://www.antonygormley.com/show/item-view/id/2562/type/solo#p1). See also *Poseidonia città d'acqua. Archeologia e cambiamenti climatici* at the Museo Archeologico Paestum (2019–20), an exhibition that explored the millennia-long relationship between water and Poseidonia, at a site that UNESCO lists among those at risk due to rising sea levels caused by climate change. The exhibition included Alessandra Franco's *Metamorfosi* (2019), a work that used the Temple of Neptune at Paestum as a canvas for images of water to pose questions about the meaning of our relationship with the environment and historical heritage: [www.alessandrafranco.it/portfolio-item/metamorfosi/](http://www.alessandrafranco.it/portfolio-item/metamorfosi/). See Zuchtriegel et al. 2019.

They created spaces into which viewers could project their own stories.

As such examples show, the current dialogue between ancient objects, contemporary art, archaeology, and museums is rich. For some time now, archaeology and museums have become expressive vehicles for artists, both as metaphors and as subjects. Perhaps this signals a move to materialize the very question of how we engage with the past: they ask who is the “we” of the museum audience; who has a stake in dialogues between antiquity and the present, and why; they also ask how reliable contemporary engagements with the past are and to what degree they have been shaped by contemporary conditions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Societies function by narratives and myths. While the lingering power of old narratives and myths is evident in the list of exhibition titles, many noteworthy recent exhibitions have created more capacious, polyvocal, and finely tuned narratives. This survey highlights exhibitions that have explored histories of museums, the field, and the spaces and people in between. It tells of exhibitions that have included the works of artists who have much to say about the making of traditions, about how societies valorize the



FIG. 9. Installation view of *Rayyane Tabet Alien Property* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art showing Rayyane Tabet, *Orthostates*, 2017 (A.-M. Kellen; courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art).

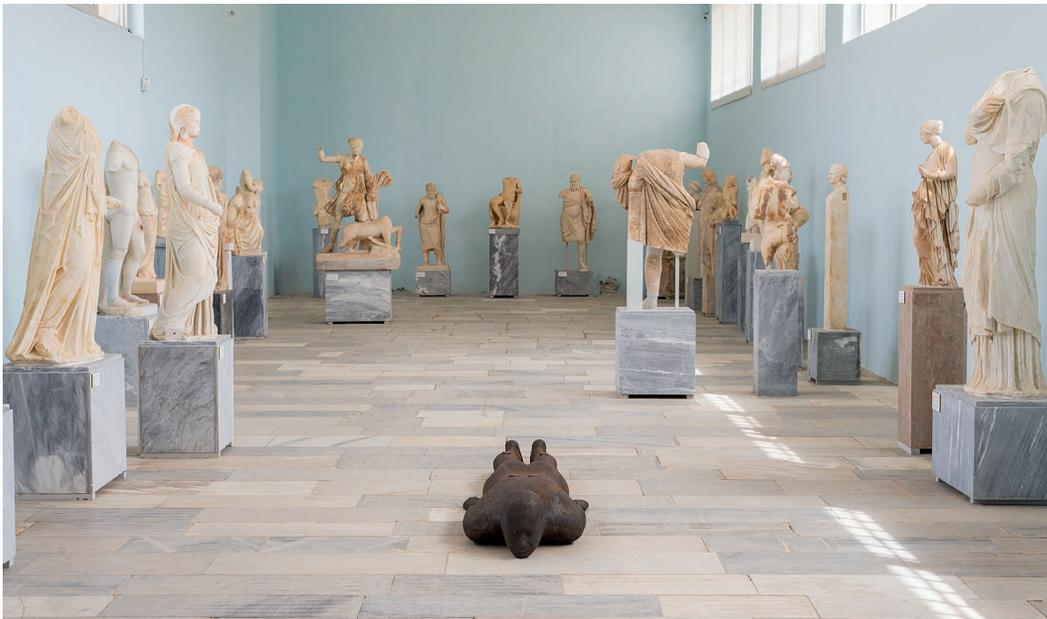


FIG. 10. Antony Gormley, *Shift II*, 2000. Installation view, *SIGHT*, at the Archaeological Museum of Delos, 2019 (© Oak Taylor Smith; courtesy NEON, Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, and the artist).

past, and about the politics of representation and ownership. Taken together, the exhibitions surveyed above and others like them point to broad, complicated, and self-reflective conversations taking place among many curators and artists. While such conversations are not entirely new, it is useful to take stock of this important trend.

In many ways, the exhibitions surveyed above are remarkably different from one another in their attitudes toward institutions and practices, ranging from exhibitions about collectors to shows that explore ways in which archaeological work has alienated modern communities from ancient heritage. Some deconstruct outdated narratives, while others offer new stories

meant to replace or transform the old. While both are valuable—and certainly the one builds on the other—perhaps the best way to replace old tropes and narratives and to attract wide audiences is through the harder, riskier, and more innovative work of creating new stories for the world today.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the museum sector hard. Almost all museums closed in the spring of 2020 and, of those that eventually reopened, many closed again in the fall. At the time of writing (spring 2021), we have seen another wave of reopenings in the United States, but many museums across the world remain closed. In various ways, this survey is a result of the pandemic; it has focused broadly on titles and topics because travel is limited. In the future, we look forward to being able to visit exhibitions more freely once again.

Exhibitions may look different, post-pandemic. It seems certain that museums will feel the financial and social impact of the health crisis for years to come. For many institutions, it may be a time of smaller exhibitions centered on the close study and rearrangement of permanent collections, punctuated by just a few key loans.<sup>49</sup> While such shows may be modest, they will offer opportunities to continue to focus on provenance, accounts of collectors and collection histories, and questions of what is in storage and why.

New topics are also sure to appear. Along with the pandemic, global social justice movements aim to overthrow long-standing hierarchies of power. The historic Black Lives Matter protests have moved people and institutions to reflect on racial bias and social inequality and to seek to make lasting changes. The overturning of public statues has highlighted how deeply racism is embedded in built environments, which include museums. A generation of curators is now challenged to address old museum narratives and create new ones. While this work was well underway before 2021, it has a new sense of urgency. As *Ancient Nubia Now* shows,<sup>50</sup> exhibitions about antiquities, their interpretations, and those who are authorized to offer such interpretations have much to contribute to our understanding of race, representation, museums, and archaeology. Topics like race and ethnicity, slavery, mi-

gration, colonization, and the environment promise to engage many viewers today.

Finally, as public spaces, museums face the challenge of helping rebuild communities after a year of isolation. How can they help restore and inspire visitors as they start to gather again? How can they help address the tragedy, loss, and amplification of inequities caused by the pandemic? Here there is much to be gained by looking to the work of artists across time but especially those working today who can help us see the broad shapes of things and offer stories that lead to healing, understanding, and empathy.

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## Appendix: Most Common Words in AJA-Listed Exhibition Titles

### Counts of Common Words in Titles Across All Listed Exhibitions

127	Egypt (98), Egyptian/s (26), Egyptologist/s (2), Egyptology (1)
126	ancient
79	Roman/s (54), Rome (25)
78	archaeology (41), archaeological (34), archaeologist/s (3)
55	art/s
50	antiquity/antiquities (41), antique (9)
50	museum/s
47	treasure/s
46	collection/s (41), collecting (5)
38	world/s
37	history/histories (35), historical (2)
31	city/cities
31	life/lives
31	pharaoh/s (28), pharaonic (3)
30	mummy/mummies
30	year/s
28	god/s (26), goddess (2)
27	Greece (13), Greek/s (13), Greco (1)
27	myth/s (22), mythology (2), mythical (1), mythomania (1), mythos (1)
27	Pompeii
26	photographs (17), photographic (5), photography (2), photographing (1), photos (1)
26	story/stories

<sup>49</sup> E.g., *Invisible Beauty*, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia (2021) and *Stories from Storage*, Cleveland Museum of Art (2021).

<sup>50</sup> See Emberling 2020.

25 exhibition/s (24), exhibit (1)  
 25 time/s  
 23 discoveries (9), discovery (7), discovering (5),  
 discovered (2)  
 23 Tutankhamun/Tut  
 22 empire/s  
 20 golden (13), gold (7)  
 19 culture/s (10), cultural (9)  
 17 land/s  
 16 classical (10), classic (2), classicism (2),  
 classicist (1), classics (1)  
 16 Etruscan/s  
 16 journey  
 16 new  
 15 age/s  
 15 eternal, eternity  
 15 king/s  
 14 coin/s (12), coinage (2)  
 14 past  
 13 hero/heroes (12), heroines (1)  
 12 Mediterranean  
 12 national  
 11 animal/s  
 11 century/centuries  
 11 contemporary  
 11 great (9), greater (1), greatest (1)  
 11 power  
 10 Arabia  
 10 first  
 10 Jerusalem

Counts of Common Words in Titles  
 Across Listed Exhibitions in the United States

35 ancient  
 31 Egypt (27), Egyptian (4)  
 16 art/s  
 15 world/s  
 13 city/cities  
 12 mummy/mummies  
 11 Rome (6), Roman (5)  
 10 collection (9), collecting (1)  
 10 treasure/s  
 8 classical (7), classicist (1)  
 8 Pompeii  
 6 antiquity (4), antique (2)  
 6 Greece (3), Greek (2), Greco (1)  
 6 museum/s  
 5 past  
 5 photographs (4), photography (1)  
 5 story/stories  
 4 animal/s  
 4 empire/s  
 4 eternal

4 gallery/galleries  
 4 golden  
 4 immortal  
 4 king/s  
 4 pharaoh/s  
 4 queen/s

Counts of Common Words in Titles  
 Across Listed Exhibitions in Europe

76 Egypt (58), Egyptian/s (15), Egyptologists  
 (2), Egyptology (1)  
 73 archaeology (41), archaeological (29),  
 archaeologist/s (3)  
 63 ancient  
 60 Roman/s (45), Rome (15)  
 38 antiquity/antiquities (31), antique (7)  
 35 art  
 33 museum/s  
 32 treasure/s  
 30 history/histories  
 25 collection/s (23), collecting (2)  
 25 years  
 24 myth/s (19), mythology (2), mythical (1),  
 mythomania (1), mythos (1)  
 24 pharaoh/s (21), pharaonic (3)  
 21 god/s (19), goddess (2)  
 21 time/s  
 19 world/s  
 18 life  
 18 photographs (10), photographic (5), photo-  
 graphing (1), photography (1), photos (1)  
 18 story/stories  
 17 Pompeii  
 15 city/cities  
 15 discoveries (5), discovering (5), discovery (4)  
 discovered (1)  
 15 empire  
 15 Etruscan/s  
 15 Greek/s (9), Greece (6)  
 15 Tutankhamun  
 14 culture/s (7), cultural (7)  
 13 age/s  
 13 exhibition  
 13 journey  
 13 land/s  
 13 new  
 12 golden (8), gold (4)  
 12 mummy/mummies  
 10 king/s (9), kingship (1)  
 10 Mediterranean

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