

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VMFA to Exhibit *Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities*
Presented by Dominion Energy



Statue of the Fertility God Hapy, 4th or 3rd century BC. Thonis-Heracleion, red granite, 5.4 m. high.
Maritime Museum Alexandria. Image © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is pleased to announce the East Coast premiere of *Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities*. The exhibition features nearly 300 objects, mostly from underwater excavations of the ancient Egyptian cities of Canopus and Thonis-Heracleion. *Sunken Cities* is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for visitors to experience the grandeur and complexity of Ptolemaic Egypt, one of the wealthiest, most powerful and influential kingdoms of the ancient Mediterranean. The exhibition was curated by Franck Goddio, the director of the European Institute of Underwater Archaeology (IEASM) and organized for VMFA by Dr. Peter Schertz, VMFA’s Jack and Mary Ann Frable Curator of Ancient Art. *Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities* will open at the museum on July 4, 2020.

The exhibition highlights ancient artifacts retrieved from Aboukier Bay off the coast of Egypt by a team of underwater archaeologists led by Goddio. In addition to some 250 works recovered by IEASM, 40 additional works from museums in Egypt help tell the story of Ptolemaic Egypt and one of its most important cults, the annual celebration of the Mysteries of Osiris.

“We are thrilled to offer this unique experience to our visitors,” said VMFA Director and CEO Alex Nyerges. “VMFA brings the world to Richmond, and this exhibition explores the fascinating history of two lost cities of ancient Egypt. This is the last time this groundbreaking exhibition will be on view in North America, and we hope to attract a wide range of visitors.”

Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities is presented by Dominion Energy. “We are delighted to be continuing our partnership with VMFA through this exciting exhibition,” said Hunter A. Applewhite, President of the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation. “Promoting cultural diversity and community vitality is an important goal for us, and we are proud to help bring these rare pieces of art to our community.”

“When people come to this exhibition, they're going to see amazing works of art that reveal the diversity of the ancient world and the ways that the civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome interacted and influenced each other more than 2,000 years ago,” says VMFA’s Jack and Mary Ann Frable Curator of Ancient Art Dr. Peter Schertz.

Highlights of the exhibition include a nearly 18-foot-tall, 5.6-ton statue of the god Hapy, the largest stone statue of a god recovered from ancient Egypt, beautiful statues of other gods and rulers of that civilization, as well as fascinating objects used to celebrate the annual Mysteries of Osiris. Powerful photography, films, maps, graphics, and an audio guide provide context and background on how these cities were lost and rediscovered. Visitors to the exhibition will discover the cosmopolitan society that emerged from the blending of Greek and Egyptian cultures after the conquests of Alexander the Great. A key aspect of the exhibition is the exploration of the cult of Osiris, ruler of the underworld and god of new life, who was celebrated throughout Egypt. Goddio’s excavations have brought to light a wealth of implements used in the celebration of the Mysteries of Osiris, one of the great religious ceremonies of ancient Egypt, which involved a maritime procession through the canals that once connected the two cities.

Sponsorship Information

Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities is presented by Dominion Energy. In addition to previous exhibition sponsorships, the museum’s Dominion Energy Galleries house one of the strongest public collections of African art in the United States.

Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities is organized by the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology with the generous support of the Hilti Foundation and in collaboration with the Ministry of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The exhibition program at VMFA is supported by the Julia Louise Reynolds Fund. Additional sponsors are The Reverend Doctor Vienna Cobb Anderson, The Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans Exhibition Endowment, Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Cabaniss, Jr., Sharon Merwin, Capital One Bank, Mrs. Frances Dulaney, Mary Ann and Jack Frable, Virginia H. Spratley Charitable Fund II, Elizabeth and Tom Allen, Lilli and William Beyer, Dr. Donald S. and Ms. Beejay Brown Endowment, Wayne and Nancy Chasen Family Fund of the Community Foundation for a greater Richmond, The Christian Family Foundation, The VMFA Council Exhibition Fund, Birch Douglass, Jeanann Gray Dunlap Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Garner, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. William V. Garner, Hamilton Beach Brands, Inc., Francena T. Harrison Foundation Trust, Peter and Nancy Huber, The Manuel and Carol Loupassi Foundation, Margaret and Thomas Mackell, Deanna M. Maneker, Alexandria Rogers McGrath, McGue Millhiser Family Trust, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, The Anne Carter and Walter R. Robins, Jr., Foundation, Joanne B. Robinson, Stauer, Anne Marie Whittemore, YHB | CPAs & Consultants, YouDecide, and two anonymous donors.

Ticket Information

The exhibition is free for VMFA members, children ages 6 and under, state employees and teachers, as well as active-duty military personnel and their immediate families; \$20 for adults; \$16 for seniors 65+; and \$10 for youth 7–17 and college students with ID.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA’s permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection

of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

Reopening Safety Measures

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is scheduled to reopen to the public on July 4 and to members beginning on July 1, 2020 with new measures in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Following the guidance of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the museum will implement safeguards to help ensure the health and well-being of its visitors, staff and volunteers. Wearing face coverings will be required and disposable masks will be provided to those who do not bring their own. To limit the number of people within the museum at one time, visitors will enter through the main entrance near the McGlothlin Wing on the first floor and exit near the Art Education Center located off North Arthur Ashe Boulevard, also on the first floor. Physical distancing must be practiced while inside the museum and outside on VMFA's grounds. The facilities and campus will be cleaned and sanitized daily, with high-touch areas and restrooms cleaned more frequently. Hand-sanitizing stations will be available throughout the museum. Clear acrylic partitions are installed at Visitor Services, in the VMFA Shop, and at all public-facing workstations. More information about what the museum is doing to create a safer visitor experience can be found at www.VMFA.museum.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.

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Media Contacts

Jan Hatchette | 804.204.2721 | jan.hatchette@VMFA.museum
Amy Peck | 804.204.2680 | amy.peck@VMFA.museum
Ume Farwa | 804.204.2702 | ume.farwa@VMFA.museum

200 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond, VA 23220