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King Tut Treasures Will Return to U.S., but Won't Stop at the Met

By SHARON WAXMAN

Published: December 1, 2004

Correction Appended

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 30 - For the first time since 1979, the treasures of the legendary Egyptian boy king, Tutankhamen, will tour the United States next year, but will bypass the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York because of a disagreement, Egypt's chief archaeologist said Tuesday.

Zahi Hawass, the head of Egyptian antiquities, said the exhibit, which is now touring Europe, would open in June at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and go on to at least three other American cities.

The exhibit will allow the American public the first glimpse in a generation of the ancient Egyptian treasures, he said.

"Twenty-six years ago King Tut captured the hearts of everyone," Mr. Hawass said in an interview. "This will capture the hearts of people again. It will bring peace, and strengthen relations between America and Egypt. King Tut is back."

The tour after Los Angeles would include Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Chicago and one other city. Mr. Hawass said he was negotiating to take the exhibit to Boston, Philadelphia and the Brooklyn Museum, but hoped it would be shown in Manhattan.

The exhibit will include King Tut's diamond crown, his gold coffin and a chair from his tomb, along with 47 other objects. An additional 81 objects from King Tut's ancestors, including Akhenaten and Queen Ti, would also be part of the exhibit, to be co-sponsored by Anschutz Entertainment Group and National Geographic. The exhibit has been in



Aladin Abdel Naby/Reuters

Tourists look at the gold mask of King Tutankhamen at the Egyptian Museum.

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Basel, Switzerland, and is now in Bonn.

Tutankhamen was crowned at age 8 and died mysteriously in 1325 B.C., at age 18. The discovery of his tomb in 1922 was one of the most spectacular finds in Egyptian archaeological history.

Mr. Hawass said a major reason Egypt had decided on the exhibit was to raise money for its crumbling antiquities: the Pyramids, the Sphinx and the priceless statuary and treasures in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens.

"There are no free meals anymore," he said. "We have a task. These monuments will be gone in 100 years if we don't raise the money to restore them."

Money was the central reason that Egypt was unable to reach an agreement to bring the new exhibit to the Met, one of the central organizers of the landmark exhibit in the 1970's.

Mr. Hawass said he received a letter from the Met's director, Philippe de Montebello, last week saying he had been unable to persuade the Board of Trustees to break the museum's policy and charge a separate admission for the show. Mr. de Montebello, reached by phone on Tuesday, reiterated that policy.

Mr. Hawass said Egypt made no money on the original exhibit, which from 1976 to 1979 displayed 55 pieces from the tomb. The show, which toured six cities, was a cultural sensation in the United States, attended by millions of people. It opened the era of blockbuster museum shows.

But when the exhibit was transferred to Germany in 1981, one artifact was damaged and the Egyptian Parliament recommended that the treasures not leave Egypt again.

Mr. Hawass and the Egyptian culture minister, Farouk Hosni, went to Parliament last year and persuaded the legislators to allow the treasures to travel again as a way of raising money, both for the antiquities and for a \$500 million museum beside the Pyramids in the Giza district of Cairo.

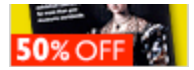
Mr. Hawass said he hoped to raise about \$10 million in each city on the American tour. The exhibit is to be announced in Los Angeles on Wednesday.

Correction: December 9, 2004, Thursday:

An article on Dec. 1 about plans for exhibitions of King Tutankhamen's artifacts in the United States next year misstated the makeup of his crown. It is made of gold, not diamonds. Because of an editing error, a front-page article last Thursday about the exhibitions misstated the adult admission price that will be charged at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It will be \$25; the \$30 price will be for weekends only.

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Zahi Hawass, the head of Egyptian antiquities, said the exhibit, which is now touring Europe, would open in at least four American cities.

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