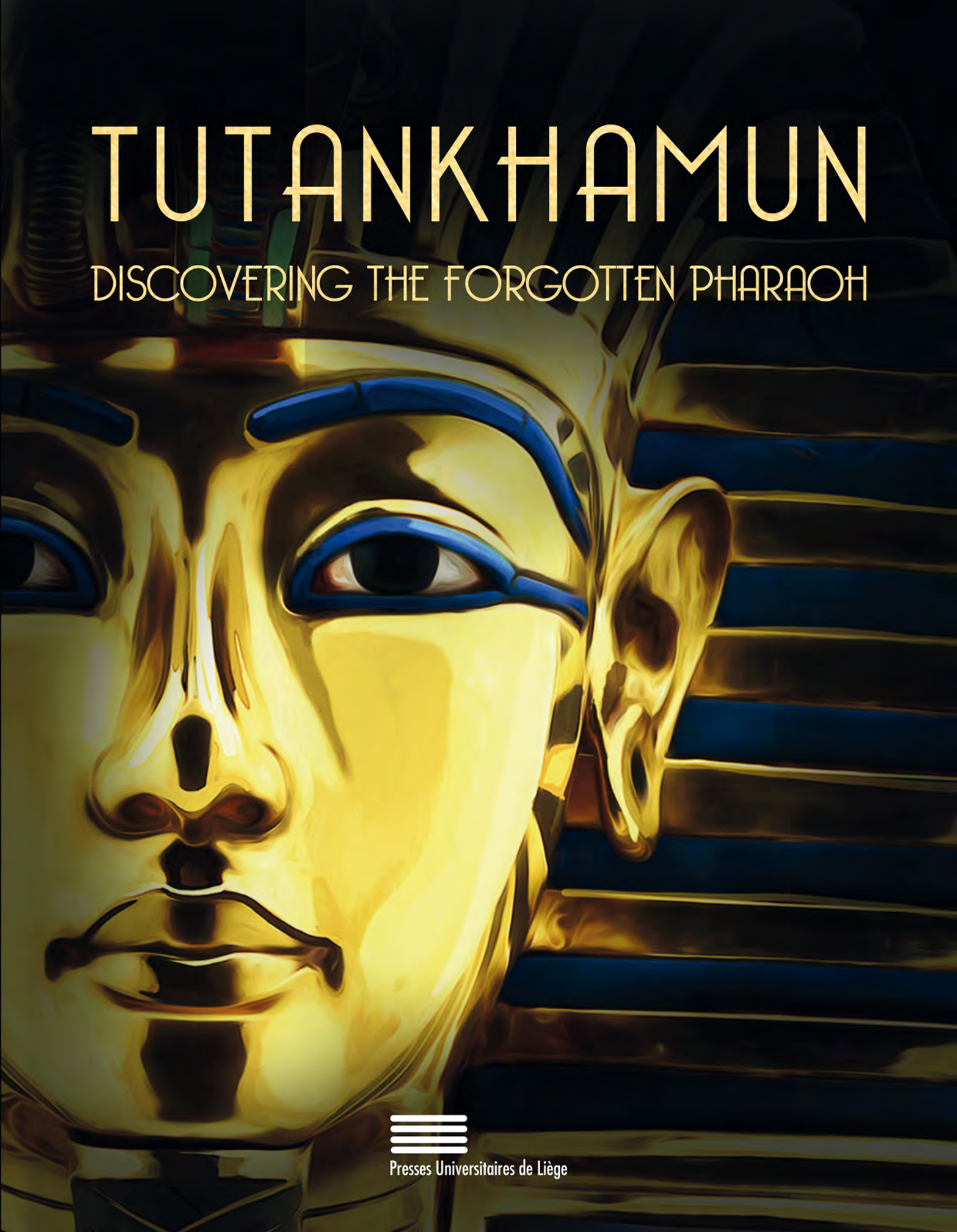


# TUTANKHAMUN

DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH



Presses Universitaires de Liège

Collection *Aegyptiaca Leodiensia* 12

**TUTANKHAMUN**  
**DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH**

Catalogue edited by

**Simon CONNOR and Dimitri LABOURY**

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Jean-Lou Stefan

The anonymous private collectors who entrusted us with their pieces.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Agostinho da Cunha, untimely seized by the Abductor, as ancient Egyptians called it.

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# The Exhibition



Simon CONNOR, Dimitri LABOURY, Alain MAGER & René SCHYNS

# Tutankhamun. Discovering the

At almost one century from the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, Europa Expo chose Howard Carter, the British archaeologist in charge of the discovery, as the narrating voice for the exhibition opening in December 2019. As the centenary nears, the boy-pharaoh is at the peak of his popularity, standing at the centre of several cultural debates. In Egypt, the tomb of Tutankhamun's queen, Ankhsenamun, is still awaiting discovery. In America and in Europe, various events celebrate the anniversary of the incredible discovery of the pharaoh's treasure, while in Cairo, the new Grand Egyptian Museum is just about to open its doors to the public and exhibit, for the first time, the pharaoh's entire funerary equipment.

Nowadays, Tutankhamun is probably Egypt's most glamorous star — and has been such since 1922. This is the reason behind our choice for the title of this exhibition: at the time of Carter, whose voice will accompany the visitor, the boy-pharaoh was nothing but a name in a list of rulers. However, what brought us to set the focus of the exhibition on him was not his name, synonymous with the

golden age of pharaohs. In fact, Tutankhamun presents himself as the ideal means to publicly narrate the extraordinary story of an Egyptologist at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and follow the adventure which led to the king's discovery. A journey into ancient Egypt, consisting of episodes of daily life, religious belief and artistic production. The aim is that of understanding on the one hand, how modern methodologies and research tools can shed light on the past, and on the other, the impact that this discovery had on art, the science of archaeology and the collective view we share of the Nile Valley.

In order to explore these topics, Europa Expo has chosen an instructive, narrative path that will introduce the visitors to the latest discoveries concerning the boy-pharaoh, his funerary equipment and the environment where he lived. Moreover, the exhibition includes exciting reconstructions of a few monuments: the cruise ship Queen Elisabeth used for travelling on the river down to Luxor, the funerary chamber of Tutankhamun, a room in the Amarna palace, a sculptor's atelier adjacent to the court, and even the laboratory where analyses on



Fig. 1: Lord Carnarvon, Lady Evelyn and Howard Carter at the entrance of Tutankhamun's tomb, at the end of January or beginning of February 1923. Private collection, UK.

# Forgotten Pharaoh

the mummy of the boy-pharaoh were carried out. These interactive spaces are alternated with more traditional museum rooms where the visitor has the chance to admire archaeological objects, watercolors and old pictures borrowed from the collections of the most prestigious museums and collectors in Europe.

This immersive approach is undoubtedly the signature feature of Europa Expo, in collaboration with Collections & Patrimoines. The adventure started in 1991, when the exhibition “All Hergé” attracted 250.000 visitors to the venue of Welkenraedt over 100 days, and allowed them to join, by means of a 3D trip, in the incredible adventures of the young reporter Tintin. This experience, which hadn’t been conceived as to comprise any sequels, was immediately followed by a meeting with Georges Simenon at his born place, Liège. Thanks to a journey exploring his tumultuous adventures, the author let the public in on the story of the commissioner Maigret and his 193 novels, nowadays translated into 47 languages. In 1995, Brussels welcomed “J’avais 20 ans en 45”, possibly one of the milestone exhibitions in Belgium, which counted 750.000 visitors over 10 months and showcased the events of the Second World War, covering all aspects of human nature. Brussels was chosen once more as the venue for two other events: “Made in Belgium”, a kaleidoscopic view of the economic, social, cultural, artistic, sportive and more generic Belgian ‘know-how’; and “Leonardo Da Vinci, the European Genius”, set in the breathtaking frame of the Basilica of Koekelberg.

In 2010, Europa Expo moved to the new TGV station of Liège-Guillemins, designed by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, where it presented the exhibition “SOS Planet”, dealing with a series of considerations on mobility and sustainable development. Never would we have imagined that the same space of 6.000 m<sup>2</sup> rented by SNCB on this occasion,



Fig. 2: faience ring bearing the name of Tutankhamun. Private collection, UK. Photograph J. James.

would have served as a venue for another exhibition. Surprisingly, “Golden Sixties” attracted almost 300.000 visitors, about 90.000 of whom arrived by train thanks to “B-Excursions”.

The exhibitions hosted at the Guillemins station became commercial vectors for the SNCB, allowing this project to continue with “Liège 14–18”, “De Salvador à Dali”, “L’armée Terracotta, l’héritage de l’Empereur chinois éternel”, “J’aurai 20 ans en 2030”, celebrating the bicentenary of Liège University, in addition to “Génération 80 Expérience”, which has just come to an end. Over one and a half million visitors have trodden the spans of the Liège-Guillemins station since 2010, and overall the exhibitions have welcomed over three and a half million visitors so far.

Europa Expo follows its aim of promoting the Belgian and international heritage, by means of exhibitions focused not only on the enhancement of artists, inventors, scientists, and key figures of international prominence, but also on social themes or emblematic periods that left a mark on the history of our society. Thanks to its experience and track record, Europa Expo presents itself as a landmark in terms of important exhibitions and cultural events at an international level.

The space made available for the exhibition devoted to Tutankhamun is vast: it extends for ca. 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, allowing visitors to wander around large-scale reconstructions of different kinds of environments.

From the start, it was decided to place the archaeological pieces side by side with modern replicas, the latter clearly distinguished from the former thanks to the condition of their display. By including these replicas, which are either plaster casts from museums in Berlin and Bruxelles, or furniture and objects created by artisans in Cairo and Liège, a double purpose may be pursued. First of all, that of displaying those pieces that are difficult or even impossible to borrow, and of placing them in an evocative environment: thanks to the replicas, the visitor is able, for instance, to experience the moment when Carter and Carnarvon entered the king’s tomb for the first time. It was only with the help of replicas that it was possible to recreate the atmosphere of this discovery, given that the royal objects, now preserved in Cairo, are currently exhibited in showcases and will never be piled up in a funerary chamber again.

Fig. 3: creation of reproductions of the walls of Tutankhamun’s burial chamber. Photograph S. Connor.



Secondly, these modern artefacts allow for the exploration of several topics, and speak for those museum pieces displayed in showcases. In this way, the replicas contribute to developing some of the themes dealt with in the exhibition.

The creation of life-size sets provided the opportunity to undertake experimental research and reproduce in the ancient Egyptian fashion and through the employment of similar pigments and supports, those paintings covering the walls of tombs and palaces, in order to understand the timing and knowledge necessary for their creation. Thanks to these re-enactments, the visitor is able for the first time to see with his/her own eyes a room in the likeness of that where Tutankhamun dwelt in his palace, or the workshop where a sculptor left behind his models and rough sketches made out of plaster. Hence, certain objects are deconsecrated in order to understand their function, while the original, ancient pieces are displayed individually in traditional showcases, provided with specific illumination to highlight their beauty.

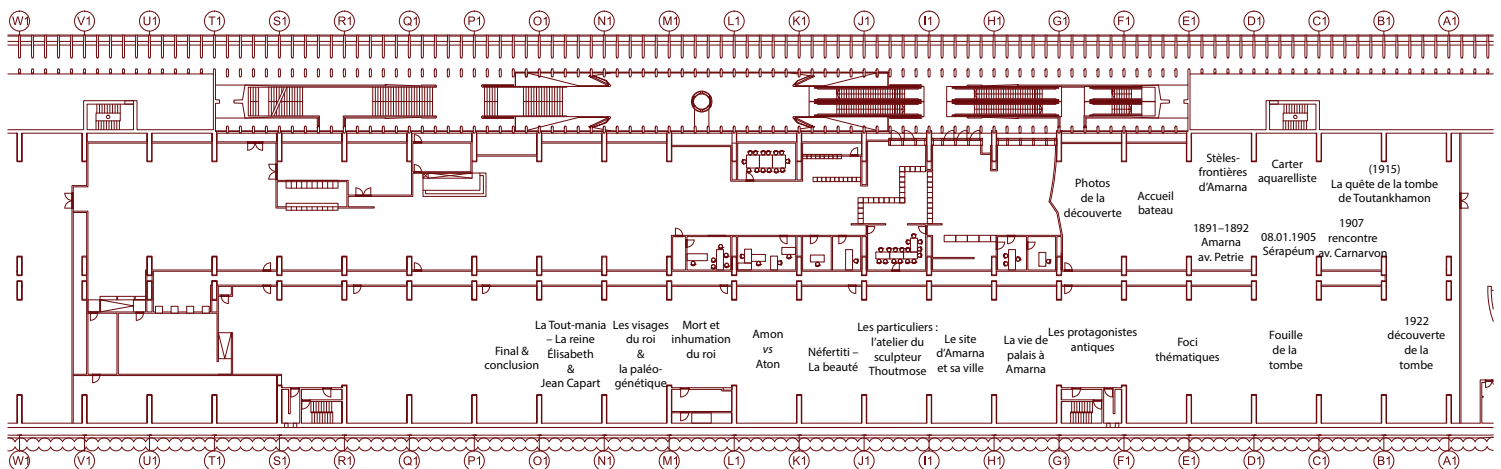
We wish to express our gratitude to those institutions that kindly participated in the fulfilment of this project: the Musée du Louvre, the British Museum, the Musée Royal de Mariemont, the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, the Badisches Landesmuseum, the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, the Manchester

Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Museum der Universität Tübingen, the Musée de l'Université de Strasbourg, together with the private collectors, who, despite their desire to remain anonymous, receive our sincere thanks.

As a result of their generous loans, it was possible to include many exceptional objects in the exhibition. Some of these are already known to the public, while others are yet to be exhibited for the first time: statues and reliefs bearing witness to the late Eighteenth Dynasty artistic period, daily life objects, furniture and baskets, amulets and funerary decor, prints of the original photographs taken by Burton at the time of the tomb's discovery, and even original watercolors painted by Howard Carter at the onset of his career.

The itinerary of the exhibition develops around fifteen apses. A selection of photographs concerning the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb first welcomes the visitor, before leading him to the deck of a cruise ship travelling upstream on the Nile until Luxor. We are at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Carter, whose narrating voice guides us through the whole tour, starts by recounting the early years of his career and those events that led him to look for Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Four rooms are devoted to the preliminary part of the discovery, following Carter around his first

Fig. 4: plan of the exhibition.



occupations in Amarna, Saqqara and Thebes. The next section of the exhibition draws the spectator inside the archaeological discovery of the century: together with Carter, he will be able to experience again the moments of the excavation and the opening of the tombs and coffins. The focus will thus be on several reproductions of pieces from the treasure, in order to tackle various themes concerning the pharaonic ideology, and to explain the reason behind their presence within the funerary equipment.

In the following section of the exhibition, Carter will take us even further back in time, 3200 years before the discovery, to gain an understanding of Tutankhamun's persona, and of the surrounding environment. The visitor will thus learn about the family members of the boy-pharaoh, such as Amenhotep III, Tiye, Akhenaten and Nefertiti. The interactive spaces will project the public into a — furnished! — room of the Amarna Palace, and through the workshop of a court sculptor. Special attention is devoted not only to the artistic sphere of this period, but also to the building up of the idea of “portrait” and of a beauty canon. Religion and politics had been at the core of the revolution

involving the palace, leaving a mark on the boy-pharaoh: the following room centres upon rivalries and the traditional pantheon, with Amun at the head, and finally Aten, the solar disc.

The king suddenly dies, and is thus buried; his tomb is robbed, and he falls into oblivion. Two rooms retrace these events, before taking the visitor back to the present day and to the studies that were carried out on the mummy of the young pharaoh, in the quest for the reconstruction of the (illusory) face of the king, and looking into the DNA analysis that places the pharaoh at the heart of the scientific debate. Who were the parents of this young king? What was the cause of his death, and what did he look like? These queries may sound anecdotic, nevertheless we long for them. The fascination that has been attracting the public who fell in love with an idealized Tutankhamun for almost a century, is the result of a proper “Tut-mania”. This mania, which developed from the 1920s up until now, represents the theme tackled in the last two rooms of the exhibition.

The volume accompanying this exhibition is not to be conceived as an exhaustive catalogue of the displayed pieces. On the contrary, this book can be

Fig. 5: panorama of the western bank in Thebes (Luxor).  
Photograph M. Kacicnik.



thought of as a companion to the visit, encouraging the public to go into more depth on those themes the exhibition dealt with. Many specialists, Egyptologists, archaeologists, conservators and historians have given their contribution, by enouncing their own point of view on the archaeological world in Egypt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the works carried out at the tomb by Carter and his team, on the funerary equipment discovered *in situ*, and on the cultural, political and religious environment that Tutankhamun lived in; not to mention the excitement surrounding the event which led to this forgotten pharaoh going from zero to hero, gifting him with one of the most evocative names in history.

Bearing in mind that this volume does not aspire to becoming the new “All-about-Tutankhamun” book — several are the volumes written over recent years on the royal child, and many other publications are upcoming as 2022 gets closer — its aim is that of providing a take on a series of matters, and challenging a number of topics. The authors were asked to answer the following question: “What do we really know, and how do we know it?”. Hence, a number of matters still open for debate will be taken into consideration. Did Carter and Carnarvon enter

the funerary chamber before its official opening? Was Tutankhamun cursed with a clubfoot? Did he die of malaria? Was Nefertiti his mother? Was his tomb intended for him?

The intention of the authors is far from providing an answer to all these questions. The book’s aim is rather that of collecting elements that could tip the scale in favour of one or the other interpretation. In many cases, the answers may let us down: we may often have an inkling, and we will, however, be forced to leave room for doubts. Such is the nature of research, accepting that we do not have the complete picture, and we may never have it.

Moreover, other essays reveal the results of recent investigations into the funerary furniture discovered by Carter. We have chosen a series of drawings and photographs to visually accompany this catalogue in such a way that the exhibited items may speak for themselves, and develop their inherent topics. It is our wish that this volume may accompany the visitor through his/her travel, and that it may be appreciated, besides being a beautiful object, as another witness to the Tut-mania: that of the pleasure of organizing a new exhibition on Tutankhamun.

