



## Groundbreaking Exhibition at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem Explores Visual Culture from the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt to Contemporary Emoji

*Presentation of rarely seen Egyptian artifacts alongside a visual emoji display will illustrate connections between ancient and contemporary visual languages*

**Jerusalem, Israel, November 5, 2019** – Today, the Israel Museum, Jerusalem announces new details of *Emoglyphs: Picture-writing from Hieroglyphs to Emoji*, a groundbreaking exhibition opening December 16, 2019 and on view through October 12, 2020 that explores the universality of pictorial writing, activating the cultural and visual connections between ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and contemporary emoji, both significant forms of communication in their respective eras. Through a presentation of the Israel Museum's significant collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts, many of which have never been on view and which depict in particular hieroglyphic inscriptions, alongside a specially-designed visual display of emoji, the exhibition fosters a new understanding of the universal need for pictorial icons and symbols, from the societies of ancient Egypt to contemporary visual media.

*“Emoglyphs: Picture-writing from Hieroglyphs to Emoji* presents a new dialogue between ancient Egypt and contemporary times through Egyptian masterpieces from the Israel Museum's collection and their parallels to emoji usage and culture, the picture-writing of the present-day, and offers a new and dynamic lens through which audiences can engage with artifacts from the Museum's collection,” said Ido Bruno, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. *“This exhibition, which embodies the Israel Museum's commitment to connecting audiences with our significant collection by demonstrating its continued relevance to everyday life, also contributes significantly to scholarship on visual culture in its research on emoji.”*

The exhibition will present a wide range of artifacts from the Israel Museum's Egyptian Collection, a majority of which have never been shown, including painted wood burial figurines from the Ptolemaic Period (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE); mummy wraps inscribed with spells from the Book of the Dead dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE; a servant figurine (ushabti) made for the burial of Khaemwaset, the son of Ramses II, dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE; and alabaster vessels used as burial gifts dating to around 3000 BCE. These artifacts, which possess inscriptions revealing the nature of the object, will appear alongside a visual display of emoji throughout the exhibition that present parallels between commonly used emoji and the application of hieroglyphs as ideograms. This visual display, designed to create a dialogue with the artifacts in the near vicinity, allows visitors to draw connections between not only the shared iconography of these past and present visual languages, but also their patterns of use. Key highlights from the exhibition include:

- Inner coffin lid of Djedmut: Made of wood painted in exceptional colors, this coffin lid dates to around 1000 BCE and is one of only two coffin lids of this type in Israel, both of which are held in the Israel Museum's collection. Inscriptions on the lid indicate that the coffin belonged to Djedmut, singer of the god Amun-Re of Karnak, and are extraordinarily executed.
- Wesekh collar: This never-before-seen gilded collar, designed to rest on the neck of the mummified body, is made of cartonnage, a mixture of linen and papyrus, and covered with a thin layer of gold, represents a key element of burial equipment dating to around 100 BCE. Depicting a large image of a winged scarab, this exceptionally unique artifact was given to the museum as



part of a gift from Jeannette and Jonathan Rosen, New York to the American Friends of the Israel Museum in 2016.

- Funerary stela of Nekhetankh: In an exceptional state of conservation and possessing nearly all its original color from over 4000 years ago, this funerary stele, dating to around 1900 BCE and held in the Israel Museum's collection, has never before been on view and displays a man alongside his son and daughter. The text on this stele bears the deceased prayer for the continued supply of his sustenance in the next life, including bread, beer, wine, fowl, and meat.
- Human-headed heart scarab of Hatshepsut: This scarab, on loan from David Sofer in London, dating to ca. 1800 BCE is one of only 4 scarabs created in this style that exist today. The scarab is human headed and the base is inscribed with a spell from the Book of the Dead, addressing the heart of the deceased during the most significant part of the journey to the underworld. In this inscription, hieroglyphs depicting legless birds are intentionally mutilated for fear that their magical powers, designed to revive the deceased, would also affect the inscription itself. Such power that is ascribed to the image of the hieroglyph will be shown to resonate also in current usages of emoji.

As an exploration of the universality of symbols and how they are used to convey emotion, ideas, data, and information, a visual language created specifically for *Emoglyphs* that combines both hieroglyphs and emoji will be included throughout the exhibition and associated materials, placing both forms of pictorial languages on the same visual plane. An animated video at the beginning of the exhibition introduces hieroglyphs as a visual language and an interactive station at the conclusion of the exhibition will allow visitors to engage with their findings from *Emoglyphs*, exploring the multitude of interpretations and meaning that emoji can possess as representations of visual culture.

“*Emoglyphs* is a thrilling opportunity to showcase a range of works from the Museum's incredible Egyptian collection,” said Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, curator of Egyptian archaeology. “The exhibition makes ancient artifacts—that may be difficult to understand—accessible by presenting them in a new context and contemporary dialogue, allowing audiences to engage with and appreciate these masterpieces by relating to them through their own personal experiences with visual language.”

The exhibition is organized by The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, and will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue by curator Shirly Ben-Dor Evian comprising research on the Israel Museum's collection of Egyptian artifacts and new scholarship devoted to the study of the visual culture of emoji.

### **About The Israel Museum, Jerusalem**

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, is Israel's foremost cultural institution and one of the world's leading encyclopedic museums. Founded in 1965, the Museum's terraced 20-acre campus houses a wide-ranging collection of art and archaeology of world-class status. Its holdings include the world's most comprehensive collections of the archaeology of the Holy Land, and Jewish Art and Life, as well as significant and extensive holdings in the Fine Arts, the latter encompassing ten separate departments: Israeli Art; European Art; Modern Art; Contemporary Art; Prints and Drawings; Photography; Design and Architecture; Asian Art; the Arts of Africa and Oceania; and the Arts of the Americas. The campus also includes the Shrine of the Book, which houses the 2,000-year-old Dead Sea Scrolls, the world's oldest biblical manuscripts; an extensive model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period; the Billy Rose Art Garden; and a dynamic Youth Wing for Art Education whose educational programs attract over 100,000 children every year. In just over fifty years, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of

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the israel museum, jerusalem  
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nearly 500,000 objects through an unparalleled legacy of gifts and support from a wide circle of friends and patrons throughout the world. The Museum also embraces a dynamic program of some 20–25 new exhibitions a year, and a rich annual program of publications, educational activities, and special cultural events that reach out to every sector of the population.

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