PHARAOHS, PAPYRI AND HOOKAHS

DISPLAYING AND STAGING EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES IN NINETEENTH CENTURY EUROPEAN EXHIBITIONS

Cecilia Hurley

For a few months during spring and summer 1867, Paris could truly claim to be the centre of the world.[1] The fourth World's Fair opened its doors on April 1; by the time that they closed, seven months later, more than 7,000,000 people had come to the Champ de Mars, bought a ticket, visited the exhibition stands in the central hall and strolled in the surrounding park. Over 50,000 exhibitors representing forty-one countries had displayed their wares and their latest scientific and technological innovations to an international and diverse public. As one commentator opined, Paris became the caravanserai for the whole world, welcoming people from many countries.[2] Among the many attractions that these visitors could see in the exhibition grounds was the Egyptian Park, a curious assembly of various buildings, one of which housed an interesting display of antiquities. This exhibit proved to be a winner, highly popular with a wide public but also admired by amateurs and scholars, including a professor at the Collège de France – Alfred Maury – who declared that »L'exposition égyptienne du Champ de Mars peut mieux qu'aucun musée de l'Europe donner une idée de ces nouvelles conquêtes de l'érudition et de l'art«.[3] These »new conquests« were, he explained, the discoveries made by archaeologists and scholars over recent years. He had outlined some in a review article some twelve years earlier; more recently, in 1865, Ernest Renan had offered a lengthy contribution concerning Auguste Mariette's excavations.[4]

EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES IN EUROPE

Maury's claim was bold. By 1867 a reasonable number of European museums housed collections of Egyptian antiquities, some of which were quite important.[5] The three major

powers – France, Prussia and the United Kingdom – had invested considerable financial and intellectual resources in large-scale scientific and archaeological surveys in Egypt. The fruits of these expeditions were then transported back to Europe, inventoried and displayed in imposing galleries in Paris, Berlin and London. Other countries, notably Austria, Holland, Italy and Russia also possessed sizeable collections of Egyptian artefacts. In addition, there were several smaller, sometimes private, galleries and collections of these objects. Newly discovered antiquities often supplemented earlier holdings, some dating back to the early Renaissance, which had often been viewed merely as decorative, historical or curious objects.[6] The presence of Egyptian antiquities in Italian, more especially Roman, collections had been attested for many centuries; during the early decades of the 19th century, these remnants of Egyptian civilisation were increasingly sought-after in many other European countries.[7] These objects were studied, drawn and reproduced, they were analysed and published and they were also displayed. Despite this rich and varied array of resources, Maury – who was by no means unacquainted with them – felt confident in asserting that the 1867 Egyptian exhibition surpassed its competitors.

When French troops entered Egypt in 1798, they were accompanied by a contingent of scholars, scientists, artists and draughtsmen whose task was to compile a survey of the country – its geography, its customs, its antiquities and its natural history. The result was the sumptuous *Description de l'Egypte*.[8] The French set up an Institute in Cairo along the lines of the Institute in Paris. By 1801, a small, select collection of antiquities (including the Rosetta Stone) had already been gathered together in preparation for being sent to the Musée Napoléon in Paris. The final and decisive victories of the British and their Ottoman allies over the French, followed by the capitulation of General Jacques-François Menou in September 1801, changed the destination of those objects: they were sent to London, to the British Museum, rather than to Paris.[9] Over the following years increasing numbers of businessmen, scholars, diplomats, travellers and tourists visited Egypt. Many acquired antiquities – with varying degrees of success. Among them were some prominent figures such as Giovanni-Battista Belzoni, Henry Salt and Bernardino Drovetti.[10] The fate of these collections was varied, and the history of collecting at this time abounds in telling episodes.[11] Large and interesting collections were assembled, and often offered to major museums or sold – sometimes *en bloc*, sometimes dispersed. Museums occasionally refused to purchase, then rapidly regretted their decision and made strenuous efforts to acquire other collections. Large sums of money exchanged hands. Rival explorers attempted to ingratiate themselves with the Egyptian ruling authorities, were ruthless in their dealings with their competitors and engaged agents to further their interests, sometimes acting outside the law.

When advising Charles X to purchase the second Salt Collection for the Louvre in 1826, Jean-François Champollion offered a precious commentary on the value and utility of museum collections. He stated that the Louvre should endeavour to acquire the most complete collection possible, and should certainly avoid a piecemeal approach to the formation of an Egyptian gallery. »Il faut s'attacher aux grands monuments et aux séries les plus complètes:

il n'est plus question, comme jadis, de composer un cabinet égyptien; l'état de la Science et ses besoins demandent qu'on crée un véritable musée d'objets égyptiens, de tous les genres, de toute proportion; et sous ce rapport la collection de Livourne ne laisse rien à désirer.«[12] Champollion was of course well placed to make such remarks about the state of the discipline and the resources that scholars needed. It is true that he had not yet visited Egypt, but he had extensive knowledge of many collections of Egyptian objects in Europe, more particularly in Italy.[13] And he had recently amazed the scholarly community and confounded his critics – especially the British polymath Thomas Young – by publishing his decipherment of hieroglyphics.[14] Champollion could assess the relative merits of different collections, their importance and their scholarly and didactic value.

Collection and museum: the words are related, close in meaning though not entirely synonymous. Associated with them, and of crucial importance for the efficient communication of contents and ideas, are the words »display« and »exhibition«. In his comments on the 1867 Egyptian show at the Exposition Universelle, Maury implied quite how dissimilar exhibitions and museums were. The difference could of course be reduced to a mere question of temporality: the exhibition is limited in time, unlike the museum, whose hallowed galleries withstand (or so we believe) the passage of time. Nevertheless, Maury seems to be hinting at something else. Maybe the exhibition, particularly the Exposition Universelle, could propose a more enticing and enlightening demonstration of Egyptian antiquities, one which could flout museum conventions and establish new viewing conditions in which the objects were really put »on show« and participating in a spectacle. Over the course of the following pages, I hope to offer a few preliminary thoughts on the question of how Egyptian objects were put on show, how they were mediated, and how they were staged in 19th century exhibitions and museums.

THE 1867 EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE

Forty years after Champollion was advocating the creation of an Egyptian museum in Paris, Egypt was one of the nations participating in the 1867 Exposition Universelle (fourth World's Fair) in Paris. The exhibition site was located on the Champ de Mars, on the Left Bank of the Seine, bordered to the north by the river and to the south by the Ecole Militaire. In its centre stood a large oval building, the Exhibition Palace, offering about 150,000 square metres of exhibition space. Frédéric LePlay, one of the principal protagonists of the event, planned an exhibition which would offer a comprehensive view of mankind, a panorama of its industrial, social and cultural achievements.[15] Obviously, the emphasis would be laid on contemporary society, its products and inventions, but LePlay also envisaged a diachronic perspective, which would be presented in a gallery entitled the »History and development of labour in the various nations«.[16] Millions of objects would be on show, from paintings and sculptures by famous contemporary artists to surgical instru-

ments and washing machines, from the Acheulean hand axe discovered by Jacques Boucher de Perthes to troughs in reinforced concrete designed by Joseph Monier.[17]

Mindful of the complaints concerning the ostensibly haphazard layout of the earlier exhibitions, the organizers attempted to offer a more logical arrangement. Should objects be classed by type or by country of production? The organizing committee drew up a plan that would combine both approaches. The centre of the hall was occupied by an exhibition devoted to the coinage, weights and measures of all nations, surrounded by a garden. Thereupon, in a series of concentric rings disposed around this centre, were the various classes of exhibits: the history and development of work in the various nations, the fine arts, materials for the liberal arts, furniture, clothing, raw materials and finally machinery. Perpendicular to these galleries, and radiating out from the central point of the building, were the national sections. Each country was allocated a certain amount of space, calculated according to a number of criteria. Among these countries was Egypt, which occupied about 400 square metres in the north-western quadrant, between Turkey to the south and China, Siam and Japan to the north.[18] This was the first time that Egypt could participate in a large international event of this type as an autonomous, tributary state: increased autonomy and the title of khedive claimed by Muhammad Ali and his successors had finally been acknowledged by the Ottoman Empire in 1866 and early 1867.[19] The driving force behind the Egyptian contribution to the exhibition was the new khedive of Egypt, Ismail Pasha (known as Ismail the Magnificent), the grandson of Muhammad Ali.[20] A devoted Europhile, he understood the political and economic importance of a strong Egyptian presence in the Paris 1867 exhibition; the country could prove its strength, its role as the second most influential power in the region, and, of course, its strategic position as a gateway to the Indian Ocean once the Suez canal was completed[21]. He thus took a keen interest in the project, overseeing the work done by a commission of dignitaries and experts whom he personally had appointed.[22]

The palace itself stood in the centre of a large park. One of the great novelties of the 1867 exhibition was the use made of this area. Rather than merely landscaping it, the organizers decided to offer the participating nations a parcel of land on which they were encouraged to construct pavilions in vernacular style. Japanese cabins, Swiss chalets, Russian *isbas*, Turkish kiosks, English cottages and Gothic chapels were juxtaposed here, and the whole park offered a breviary of national architectural styles and building techniques situated in the centre of Paris. Amongst these various buildings, on a plot of 4,800 square metres, was the Egyptian Park, including a temple – approached via a ceremonial path lined by sphinxes –, a palace (*selamlik*), a staging-post (*okel*) and stables.[23] On an adjoining plot, although not part of the official Egyptian area, was a pavilion constructed and used by the Suez Canal Company.[24] The other four buildings were financed by the Egyptian government, at considerable cost – it was claimed that Egypt had invested more than £60,000 on her participation in the exhibition.[25] Once again the driving force was Ismail Pasha, aided by his commission of experts.

The Egyptian Park offered visitors a number of vignettes of Egyptian life and customs conveyed to Paris for a six-month period in 1867. The group of buildings constituted, as has been pointed out, an epitome of Egyptian civilisation across the centuries: the temple recalled antiquity, the *selamlik* represented Arab civilization and the medieval period, while the *okel* embodied contemporary craftsmanship, trade and economic life.[26] Even the stables were an important element in this configuration. They were of simple construction and were notable mainly for their inhabitants. Four animals lived here throughout the exhibition: two dromedaries and two donkeys. As might have been predicted, they proved to be an attraction, drawing many interested visitors. Few descriptions of the Egyptian Park failed to mention them and to point out their distinctive features. Thus it was that readers learned that, contrary to popular belief, a dromedary had only one hump instead of two, was possessed of remarkable powers of endurance and also had a very elegant gait.[27] The Egyptian donkey, we learn from the same texts, differs from its European cousins in that it is not only elegant but also affable and easy-going.[28] The four beasts may have been there to add authentic and picturesque detail, but they also served another far more instructive purpose. As many authors pointed out, they represented the main methods of transportation in Egypt. Another important method of transport in Egypt was also present since a *dahabeeyah* (the flat-bottomed barges found on the Nile) was moored close by on the Seine.[29]

Close to the stables was the *okel*, a covered market, bazaar or caravanserai.[30] The *okel* constructed in Paris was modelled on similar bazaars found throughout Upper Egypt, but with two important additions, namely a portico on the north facade and a two-storey extension on the south facade. The design for the windows was borrowed from buildings in Cairo.[31] Nonetheless, as the Egyptian Park's creators were anxious to insist, this remained a relatively faithful imitation of constructions of this type that could be seen across Upper Egypt.[32] An *okel* was a building serving many functions. It was a staging-post and an inn that also housed one or more shops – or a bazaar – and workshops. In other words, it constituted the economic heart of an area. One author ventured a comparison between the *okel* and the Parisian galleries, passages or even the Palais Royal.[33]

The Parisian *okel* housed a café and a number of workshops, fitted out with traditional features and furnishings. Here artisans who had come over from Egypt for the period of the exhibition practised various trades using authentic Egyptian tools and techniques. One visitor to the fair explained what he had seen in the following terms:

> »In the first place we have the Okel where real natives, [...], work at several trades. Among those artizans [sic] one who attracts a great share of attention, is the turner, a grave old man, who slowly guides with his left toe the blade of the lathe, whilst he wields with his right hand a bow which causes it to revolve. A more primitive apparatus it is impossible to imagine; it has probably been handed down from father to son since the time of the Pharaohs.

If men show a preference for the turner, ladies seem more interested with the jeweller who manufactures quaint rings, necklaces, bracelets and anklets out of gold and silver filigree.
A little further we see a barber shaving his countrymen in true Oriental fashion.«[34]

Craftsmen specializing in leather work and passementerie were also in the building. Free coffee and *chibouks* were offered to anyone who obtained an official pass from the commissioner general's office. Furthermore (just as was the case in an authentic *okel* in Upper Egypt) the artisans actually lived in the building throughout the exhibition. They genuinely reproduced – in so far as was possible under the Parisian skies – the conditions of life, work and trade in an Egyptian bazaar and staging-post.

The third building in this complex also served as lodgings periodically. The palace or *selamlik* was an elegant construction designed in Arab style, and rich in colour and decoration. It was built in alternate courses of blue and white stone above which was a white battlement; a central tower was surmounted by a cupola, atop of which was a gold crescent.[35] The palace served two functions. Several rooms were used as exhibition spaces, where a number of objects relating to the geography and geology of Egypt were on show. Relief maps of Lower and Middle Egypt, two relief plans of Alexandria and several other maps were displayed here. A collection of geological specimens, a series of drawings and plans by students in the Egyptian military schools and a range of books in the Arabic and Turkish languages were also to be seen, as was a number of photographs of Egypt.[36] The other rooms were used by the Egyptian viceroy when he was in Paris. He held audiences here, in all likelihood lounging on a divan and smoking a hookah. The final building in the group was the reconstruction of an ancient temple which housed a number of precious objects.

PARIS-EGYPT – SHOWS AND VOYEURISM

This Egyptian Park with its faithful imitations of typical buildings and furnishing, brought to life by an engaging cast of characters, and even offering glimpses of Egyptian fauna has been analysed and decrypted by a number of commentators over recent years.[37] Some scholars, especially those working in the field of post-colonial studies, have interpreted it, and also the Egyptian contribution to other World Fairs and similar events, as evidence of the voyeuristic tendencies of Europeans. Timothy Mitchell, for example, precedes his study of what he calls the »power to colonise« in Egypt with a wide-ranging study of the representations of Egyptian culture in 19th century European exhibitions, fairs and congresses; he suggests that these events reveal a Western »observing« gaze, and that one of the corollary effects of this gaze was that »non-European visitors found themselves being placed on exhibit or made the careful object of European curiosity«.[38] He hypothesizes that the Egyptian craftsmen and the viceroy were almost on a par with objects, put on show not

just to be looked at cursorily but rather to be closely studied and even to be scrutinized, and that this act was often degrading. Other commentators have examined these shows, exhibitions and fairs from the point of view of social or cultural history, or equally in the context of museum studies. They are more inclined to interpret this gaze as a constitutive feature of these events, less colonial or colonizing and dominating than inquiring and heuristic.[39] Paul Tenkotte borrowed the metaphor of the kaleidoscope, suggesting that the international exhibitions offered different (and mobile) views of the world.[40]

Some authors have preferred to eschew the debate over the ostensible staging of the Occidental-Oriental divide and to concentrate rather on the Expositions Universelles merely as spectacles and on their relation to leisure activities at this time – including the museum or, at least, some museums. It is certainly true that the Egyptian Park in Paris – and by analogy the Exposition Universelle as a whole, with its combination of objects and settings, animated by a cast of exotic figures – could be likened to the museum-spectacle of that era. The vernacular buildings with their inhabitants could be assimilated with the *tableaux vivants* beloved of travelling fairs, circuses and some museums. It may even therefore be possible to identify shades of Barnum and his American Museum (which had of course burned down for a first time only two years before this 1867 extravaganza) in the bond between instruction and entertainment that the Exposition Universelle seemed to be fostering.[41] This would, in turn, tend to suggest that it is but a short step to identifying it as one of the multitudinous manifestations of the exhibitionary complex as analysed by Tony Bennett in his *Birth of the Museum*.[42] The exhibitionary complex, in Bennett's view, allows us to comprehend how museums use display and the idea of »spectacle« in order to communicate disciplinary discourses. This spectacular (or »exhibitionary«) discourse is to be understood as an alternative to the theories of »control« and »surveillance« or even »imprisonment« that were applied to the museum and its »totalizing narratives« posited by some authors who based their theories on Michel Foucault.[43] Lara Kriegel observes that Bennett views the museum as »a tool that helped to cultivate the disciplined eye and the self-regulating subject«.[44] The outstanding example of this, which Kriegel considers almost paradigmatic in its form and in the use made of it, was the South Kensington Museum. A large and varied number of objects was classified, organized and deployed in the museum's rooms in order to enable visitors to both see and comprehend them easily. The results of this enlightened museum pedagogy were soon conspicuous, since numerous commentators noted that a disciplined working class, avid for knowledge and learning, flocked to the museum in the evenings. As Bennett has pointed out, the Expositions Universelles were another expression of this.[45] At first sight the gulf between the spectacular, show-inspired and maybe even Barnumesque tones of certain areas of the Expositions Universelles would seem to preclude any comparison with the sober halls of the South Kensington (or indeed of any of the contemporary museums, including the National Gallery in London, the Louvre in Paris and the Berlin Museums) and the learning that they embodied and inspired. Surely the Egyptian Park with its affable donkeys, grave old turner, Egyptian barber and hookah-smoking vice-

roy could not hope to offer anything more than an agreeable few minutes or hours of distraction and reverie? It could certainly not hope to rival with the serious and weighty intellectual aims of the presentation of Egyptian culture and history that was offered on the other side of the Seine, a few hundred metres away, in the galleries of the Louvre museum with their ornate and highly symbolical iconographical programme?

As we have seen, Alfred Maury, a distinguished scholar who was a professor at the Collège de France and a friend of Gustave Flaubert thought otherwise.[46] He penned a lengthy and highly erudite article on the Egyptian Park in the September 1867 issue of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.[47] Maury had worked on a range of subjects by that time; besides a number of major contributions on Antiquity he had also written a study of fairies during the Middle Ages and a book on sleep and dream theory, including a famous excursus on a dream about the guillotine which was later to be recounted and analysed in depth by Freud.[48] He was a respected and an exacting scholar. In his view, no European museum could propose a more convincing and accurate account of the recent discoveries in Egyptology: »L'exposition égyptienne du Champ de Mars peut mieux qu'aucun musée de l'Europe donner une idée de ces nouvelles conquêtes de l'érudition et de l'art.«[49]

Maury's comment is particularly striking. If we are to believe him – and there is no immediate reason to distrust the opinion of a professor at the Collège de France who was a noted authority on antiquity and who proffered this observation at the beginning of a lengthy and erudite survey of recent discoveries in Egypt and of modern scientific literature on ancient Egyptian civilisation – this »showground« was thus more conducive to the presentation and explanation of studies on Egypt and of Egyptian art than any museum in Europe. In other words, this seven-month long exhibition featuring two donkeys, a turner, a barber and a hookah-smoking viceroy was more enlightening regarding ancient Egypt, its civilisation and its customs than the impressive collections of Egyptian antiquities in the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, the Neues Museum in Berlin and the Museo Egizio in Turin.[50] What exactly did Maury see in the Egyptian Park that inspired this somewhat surprising remark?

TEMPLES AND TREASURES

Apart from the three buildings described above, there was one further construction on the plot. The Hathor temple was a bijou replica of an Egyptian temple; inside it was a small but very select exhibition of objects. It was the inspiration of Auguste Mariette, a member of the commission appointed by Ismail Pasha; Mariette can plausibly be referred to as the maestro of the Egyptian contribution to the 1867 Exposition. He was a self-educated Egyptologist. On the death of his cousin, Nestor L'Hôte, an erstwhile colleague of Champollion on a number of missions in Egypt, Mariette was invited to sort and class his papers. Increasingly fascinated by what he found therein, he determined to study Egypt and its

civilisation. He went to work in the Louvre, and his efforts were rewarded some years later when he was sent on a mission to Egypt to purchase manuscripts. The promised sale fell through, but Mariette was undeterred: he used the money to finance excavations at Saqqara where he unearthed the ceremonial sphinx avenue and the subterranean tomb and temple complex. He thereafter continued to prospect and excavate with considerable tenacity and, after a number of brilliant results, managed to establish the Egyptian Department of Antiquities and a museum in Bulaq (the forerunner of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo).[51]

In his text on the Egyptian Park, intended as a guidebook, Mariette explained the temple's architecture and its functions:

> »Le programme que nous avions à remplir, quand l'Exposition a été décidée, était celui-ci: élever dans le Parc une construction qui, par la disposition de son plan, puisse server d'abri à la collection d'antiquités égyptiennes envoyée de Boulaq, et qui en même temps soit pour le Parc un embellissement.
> Pour remplir ce programme, nous n'avons trouvé rien de mieux à faire que de bâtir un Temple sur un des modèles que les Pharaons nous ont laissés.
> Le Temple du Parc égyptien est donc avant tout un musée.
> Mais, chemin faisant, nous l'avons utilisé pour essayer de donner au visiteur une idée de ce que fut l'art égyptien à ses trois époques les plus caractéristiques. […].
> Le monument du Parc égyptien est donc bien ce que nous avons voulu qu'il fût: un musée qui serait à la fois un temple, et un temple qui, du noyau à la circonférence, nous présenterait un résumé chronologique de l'art qui florissait sur les bords du Nil antérieurement à la venue du Christianisme.«[52]

Mariette is very clear on one point: this temple was certainly partially – but not only – an eye-catching showpiece, an atmospheric pastiche. Nor was it the perfect reconstruction of an ancient temple, based on the most exact archaeological evidence and recreated in slavish detail. Mariette was lucid. He acknowledged that none of the known temples could serve as a satisfactory model for the Parisian construction. Some were too small, some were too big, others were too ruined, yet others had an overly complicated floor plan.[53] He therefore decided to base loosely the 1867 temple on the West temple (the »Temple de l'Ouest«) at Philae: the building's plan, its volumes and its proportions were all a faithful imitation of the Egyptian original, whereas the decorative scheme was an interpretation and reworking of a number of different sources.[54] Unfortunately, Mariette's appellation was far from clear, and the Parisian temple's model has been variously identified as a number of different buildings on the site at Philae. Careful study of the sources available, especially plans drawn up only a few years earlier and the photographic evidence, suggests that this is the small temple lying to the southwest of the entrance to the Temple of Isis, the Mammisi, a small chapel in the vicinity of a larger temple which was associated with the birth-place of the

god.[55] Some of the decorative elements were drawn from the Philae Mammisi, others were borrowed from a number of other temples, essentially those at Dendera, Abydos, Ombos [Naqada], Esneh and Edfu. Mariette and his artisans thereby managed to create a perfect composite model – not *an* Egyptian temple but *the* Egyptian temple – which could serve as an epitome of the three most characteristic periods of Egyptian art. Time was certainly not on their side, and Mariette complained that they had had to work to a very tight schedule. This did not authorize them to cut corners though. Most of the architectural details and ornaments were reproduced as faithfully as possible: colour samples were secured in Egypt and then brought back to Paris and used for the wall paintings; moulds were taken of some features on the buildings *in situ* and casts then produced in Paris; photographs, sketches and squeezes were also used in order to record as accurately as possible a multitude of details.[56] The reviewer in a London building-trade journal commented that the buildings in the Egyptian Park – contrary to those around them – were »very exact and good«, conveying a very honest impression of Egyptian architecture. The credit for this was to be laid at the door of Mariette and his craftsmen who have striven for »truthfulness of detail and exactitude of modelling«.[57] The temple was dedicated to a triad of deities, Hathor, Horus and Harsomtus, the child of their union.[58]

Mariette's temple was adorned with architectural elements and decorative features typical of the three most important periods of Egyptian art, namely the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the Ptolemaic eras. It was laid out in three concentric zones: an innermost room (the *sekos* or sacred enclosure), around which ran a corridor which was in turn surrounded by the colonnade (or the exterior circumference of the temple). The *sekos* was constructed in Old Kingdom style, after the model of a Fifth Dynasty tomb to which a number of columns typical of buildings of that date were added.[59] The corridor was embellished with paintings in New Kingdom style; this ensemble was then further enhanced by the addition of a number of decorative details, such as a cartouche believed to be that of Queen Ahhotep II (17th Dynasty), doors from the time of Seti I (19th Dynasty) and a hieroglyphic text copied from the temple of Seti I in Abydos.[60] The colonnade – with four columns on the shorter sides and seven on the longer – was a construction typical of the Ptolemaic period.[61] The bas-reliefs were carved in a somewhat nonchalant style, which Mariette felt was symptomatic of the Alexandrian period. The inscriptions were also reminiscent of the same epoch. And, above all, the capitals with floral motifs were inspired by the Greeks according to Mariette (»c'est avec les Grecs seulement que le chapiteau se complique et s'épanouit en bouquet de fleurs entremêlées comme nous le voyons ici.«)[62]

The temple was approached along a short alleyway flanked with ten sphinxes, casts taken from a model in the Louvre; at the head of this avenue stood a monumental gateway – the pylon. On passing through this portal, visitors embarked on a journey through time, leaving the familiar surroundings of 19th century Paris to travel to the exotic setting of ancient Egypt. They strolled along the avenue, with the large and imposing sphinxes on either side, to reach the massive temple, whose façade, entirely covered in richly-coloured scenes rem-

iniscent of the wall paintings found in tombs, towered nine metres above them. On reaching the temple, their journey through time had not come to an end, however. For once they had entered the building they began anew, this time walking back through the centuries from the Ptolemaic period in the colonnade to the New Kingdom in the corridor before arriving, finally, in the *sekos*, or the Old Kingdom. The effect was no doubt spectacular and must have elicited gasps of wondering admiration from experts and amateurs alike. Mariette had created an almost theatrical atmosphere, which played on popular preconceptions about Egypt and its architecture while remaining remarkably faithful to the country's buildings and its history. Scarcely a surface was left blank – cartouches, hieroglyphs, Egyptian figures, stylized lotus flowers covered the walls and ceilings. This remarkable décor, this voyage back through the centuries was not, however, mere showmanship and stagecraft, destined to astound an amenable audience. Mariette put this backdrop to very good use. For on entering the *sekos*, the visitor – surrounded by the stunning architecture – found himself or herself face to face with an equally extravagant collection of antiquities.

Mariette had brought over to Paris a number of extremely precious and important masterpieces from the Bulaq museum, which he had founded less than ten years earlier in 1858.[63] Hundreds of objects were on show here, carefully organized by the Egyptologist; among them were some that had been excavated very recently.[64] The statue of Khafre enthroned,[65] the alabaster statue of Queen Amenirdis[66] and gold axes sat alongside many important vestiges of Egyptian art and archaeology.[67] One of the principal highlights was the jewel case that had belonged to Queen Ahhotep (wife of Kamose) and its contents, including a golden diadem decorated with two sphinxes and a small case, a wide cuff bracelet with golden figures laid on a background in blue glass paste imitating lapis lazuli, a *usekh* broad collar composed of dozens of intricate gold charms and beads, and a pair of elaborate pendant earrings. Empress Eugénie cast covetous eyes over the treasures before informing Ismail Pacha that she would feel very honoured to receive them. The khedive demurred, insisting that Mariette should decide. The archaeologist, on the other hand, was intransigent, refusing the Empress's request outright.

Maury's comment about the power of this small exhibition in comparison with the larger, permanent Egyptian galleries in museums across Europe seems to make more sense when understood in this context. Mariette's exhibition strategy could nevertheless be considered rather risky. Could he not be accused of playing to an audience, hoping to harness the spectacular effects of attractions such as Barnum's circus in order to communicate a serious message?[68] To use a neologism (and fully aware of all the risks of anachronism that this entails) Mariette seems to have been exploiting what we would now call the »edutainment« or »infotainment« value of a show. Both neologisms, coined in the 1980s in the United States, refer to shows, media or productions which educate or inform while entertaining. They are often employed when referring to museums and museum work nowadays, brandished as a solution to falling visitor numbers and to the museum's perceived failure to attract visitors from all socio-economic groups.

Maury was not alone in congratulating Mariette for his decision. The journalist Hippolyte Gautier stated unequivocally that the Egyptian Park was not only one of the most sumptuous displays in the whole Exposition Universelle, but also the most complete and the most instructive.[69] The journalist Edouard Siebecker, writing in the *Album pittoresque*, opined that the Egyptian Park and the temple-museum were the most »remarkable exhibits« in the Exposition.[70] Siebecker was sincere in his admiration of Mariette's work at the Champ de Mars; he urged his readers to go to see the Egyptian exhibition, even playing somewhat on their fears by emphasizing that they had only a few months to enjoy it. »Cependant, cette exposition est si remarquable; elle sera de si courte durée que nous voulons absolument forcer le spectateur à une attention soutenue [...]«.[71]

Other critics, such as Emile Egger, a professor of ancient Greek, were equally fulsome in their praise. Egger ventured to suggest that the Egyptian Park could be considered a paradigm for the perfect museum visit. In 1867, he gave a conference at the Asile impérial de Vincennes, a convalescent home for workers opened in 1860 and placed under the patronage of Empress Eugénie. Egger opened his reflexions by observing that all too few people visit museums in a constructive or beneficial fashion. They wander into the building, stroll through it – probably in a desultory fashion – looking at objects but not really seeing them and then walk out at the other end.[72] As a result, they have learned virtually nothing. As an antidote to what he identified as a problem of modern life, Egger recommended a visit to the Egyptian exhibition in the Exhibition Palace and in the park; he indicated the most instructive route through the exhibits, accompanied by comments on a number of the more noteworthy sights or objects. He advised his readers to examine the products on show in the main exhibition hall before making their way to the Egyptian Park where they would find a panorama of Egyptian life – from the ancient temple to the contemporary *okel*. Industry, art, geography, crafts, history, customs and traditions were deployed in the different spaces; the show was informative and agreeable, offering a full survey of Egypt's past and present. Interestingly, Egger did qualify his judgement about the instructional value of this (or any) show when he stated that visitors would be prone to any number of slip-ups and misapprehensions if they did not take the simple precaution of purchasing (for the modest sum of 4 francs) three small guide-books. He recommended Mariette's guide to the Egyptian show, Ferdinand de Lesseps's booklet on the Suez canal plans and, perhaps more surprisingly, Emmanuel de Rougé's guide to the Egyptian antiques in the Louvre.[73]

EGYPTIAN COLLECTIONS IN MUSEUMS

Egger, like Maury, was fully aware of the Egyptian galleries in the Louvre, and included the catalogue by de Rougé among his list of recommended titles for those interested in Egyptology. Despite this, he – like Maury – believed that the Egyptian Park was more instructive and didactic than the galleries in the Louvre or in other European museums.[74]

By the time that Maury and Egger were writing, European museums had been collecting and displaying Egyptian antiquities for little more than fifty years. Whereas Greco-Roman masterpieces had been collected and coveted, treasured, studied and transmitted for centuries, the remains of the pharaonic and Ptolemaic civilizations were relatively recent arrivals in museum galleries. Furthermore, generations of schoolchildren and students had been drilled in Latin and Greek language and literature and in Roman and Greek history. The busts of the emperors and their families, of great generals, of famous philosophers conjured up memories of a distant European past, well-known because of the accounts given by the great historians and belletrists of antiquity. Episodes from the lives of the gods and goddesses, heroes and villains of myths were recognizable thanks to the scenes drawn from Greek and Roman mythology which graced the walls of private and public galleries or, in the form of engravings, illustrated texts by Vergil, Homer, Ovid and other major authors. The same could not be said of Egyptian civilization. The names of the pharaohs, the succession of the dynasties, the divinities – everything was much more unfamiliar, except to the most erudite and well-read visitors. The statues and sarcophagi inspired awe and wonder, as did the papyri and steles with their hieroglyphic texts, fascinating to observe but incomprehensible to all but a very small minority. Fascinating and oddly beautiful they may have been, but to an eye accustomed to the Western canon, these collections were – in aesthetic terms at least – peculiar and untypical.

Throughout the 19th century (and ever since) these collections were to be put on show in autonomous departments in museums. Here the material traces of Egyptian civilization were to be exhibited as an organic whole, illustrating and elucidating the culture, thought and practices of the period of their creation. These new departments were being established in the 19th century public, democratic and secular museum. Curators thus found themselves facing a dilemma: should they attempt to present these collections within a neat linear historical continuum, turning them into the natural forerunners of Greco-Roman antiquity and conveniently effacing or ignoring their peculiarities and anomalies? They could thereby use the display techniques that had served so well in the past for the vestiges of Greece and Rome. Or should they acknowledge and welcome these differences, and create a museum setting which would offset them perfectly? Various answers were found during the course of the 19th century.

PARIS

During the first decades of the 19th century, the Louvre possessed a negligible collection of Egyptian antiquities. Many masterpieces originally selected for the Louvre by the scholars accompanying the French expeditionary force had – after the joint British and Ottoman victory over Menou's forces – ended up in London. A paltry number of Egyptian objects, acquired as a result of revolutionary confiscations or the purchase of collections (notably

from the Borghese and Albani families), adorned the Salle d'Isis (opened in 1817) and adjoining rooms; here they were exhibited alongside miscellaneous Egyptianizing sculptures.[75] The Salle d'Isis was the last room in the series of spaces housing the Greek and Roman antiquities; it was decorated in much the same way as the other galleries in that part of the museum, its walls covered with coloured marble from the floor to the cornices.

Less than ten years later Champollion was appointed head of Egyptian antiquities at the Louvre.[76] In the meantime, the museum had refused to purchase the Bernardino Drovetti collection (which went to Turin in 1823) and it had also overlooked the first group of works gathered together by Fortuné Thédenat-Duvent (sold at auction in 1822; the Cabinet des Antiques at the Bibliothèque royale managed to acquire a few pieces).[77] Aware of this oversight, the authorities determined to repair their error at the first possible opportunity.[78] This they did soon afterwards when a number of collections came onto the market. First the Edme Durand collection, in 1825, and then the following year the second Salt collection – the first one had gone to the British Museum in 1819.[79] One year later, in 1827, they managed to bid successfully for a number of lots at the Brindeau and the Denon sales, and then to acquire the second Drovetti collection in its entirety.[80]

Thousands of objects thus arrived in the museum within only two years; the Salle d'Isis and the adjoining rooms could not hope to house them all. Fortunately, a solution was at hand. In 1824, the comte de Forbin proposed a new museum, under the patronage of Charles X. The king concurred. Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine projected a series of four rooms on the first floor of the south wing of the Cour Carrée for the Durand collection. One year later, after the arrival of the Salt collection and other ensembles (Tochon and Drovetti), he changed his plans: the museum would now consist of nine rooms in enfilade.[81] Four of these rooms were to be devoted to the Egyptian Museum, directed by Champollion; the other rooms were for Greek antiquities. Work began soon after and sixteen months later, in December 1827, the museum opened, six weeks later than originally planned. The fault lay with Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Antoine-Jean Gros who had not managed to complete the ceilings which they were to deliver.[82] The visitors could at long last see the fruit of Champollion's labours. In four rooms, in a series of tall display cases and lower, table vitrines, the Louvre's Egyptology collections were carefully laid out.[83] Each object bore a label indicating a letter and a number; under the corresponding entry in the *livret* visitors could read a succinct and informative discussion of the object. Materials and techniques were here specified, divinities identified and various customs, traditions and practices explained. Every object on show in the galleries in 1827 was included in the small catalogue, which has recently been republished and analysed by Sylvie Guichard.[84]

By the time that Champollion began planning the new rooms in the Louvre, he had a clear idea of what an Egyptian museum should look like.[85] Only a few years earlier, he had been in Turin; his stay coincided with the early discussions about the new galleries there, their form and their presentation. Determined to make his opinions heard, Champollion had sent a letter to the Minister for the Interior in which he had explained how the objects could

be organized: »Je me permettrai également de vous arrêter quelques instants, Monseigneur, sur la classification qu'il conviendra d'établir parmi ce nombre immense de monuments. Il ne saurait aucunement entrer dans les vues de Votre Excellence, que le Musée Royal Égyptien fût, comme beaucoup de musées, une espèce de magasin, où les objets sont entassés sans ordre et placés sans relation les uns avec les autres.«[86] According to Champollion, it would indeed be far easier to organize Egyptian collections than Greco-Roman, largely because of the ubiquity of the written word. Champollion believed that every Egyptian object bore an inscription in hieroglyphics explaining its function. He advised a simple classification into three main categories: religious, historical and funerary monuments:

> »Les monuments Égyptiens se prêtent bien mieux que ceux des Grecs et des Romains à une classification à la fois méthodique et scientifique. Chaque objet porte toujours une inscription originale qui indique sans incertitude et son but et sa destination. Rien de plus facile et de plus convenable à la fois que de suivre strictement ces indications, et de disposer ces morceaux selon qu'ils appartiennent à la classe des monuments religieux, des monuments historiques ou des monuments funéraires. Ces trois grandes classes se subdivisent en diverses sections suffisamment indiquées par la nature des choses.«[87]

Only three years later, when dealing with the Louvre's collections, he had an opportunity to put theory into practice. He distributed the objects into three main groups, and named the exhibition spaces accordingly: »Room of the Gods« (room 4), »Room relating to civil life« (room 2) and »Funerary rites rooms« (rooms 1 and 3). The collection was comprehensive, comprising most aspects of Egyptian life and beliefs. Statuettes of divinities and of pharaohs, jewellery, tools, domestic furnishings, offerings of food deposited in tombs, contracts written on papyrus, weapons, musical instruments, games, mummies, funerary portraits: a stroll through the Egyptian galleries, catalogue in hand, could offer the visitor a remarkable journey through Egyptian civilisation and history.[88] The great Egyptologist was not, however, entirely satisfied, largely because he felt that the surroundings did not do justice to the objects on show.

He regretted above all that the Louvre's Egyptian antiquities were exhibited in two different places in the museum. The enfilade of four rooms in the Musée Charles X was by far not large enough to house the monumental statues and sphinxes. Champollion and Jean-Baptiste, Comte de Clarac – the curator of the Greek antiquities – both felt that their collections required more space and each began to campaign for more gallery space. Never given to modesty, Fontaine claimed that he alone had managed to broker peace between the two men by means of the timely suggestion that Champollion should occupy three additional rooms on the ground floor.[89] Champollion acceded and many of the largest, most imposing objects were therefore housed there. Unfortunately, there was no direct access from these galleries to the rooms in the Musée Charles X. One of Champollion's successors, De Rougé explained the problem twenty years later, when he observed that »Ce Musée,

restreint, comme il était, aux objets d'un petit volume, perdait le plus grand côté de sa physionomie pour les arts et l'histoire. Les petits objets font pénétrer dans l'intimité d'un peuple et révèlent à l'archéologue les détails de sa civilisation; mais on est nécessairement frappé d'une impression plus vive lorsqu'on entre dans la salle des grands monuments.«[90]

No doubt Champollion had hoped to be able to profit from the striking contrast between the monumental granite sphinxes, sculptures and sarcophagi on the one hand and the smaller, more mundane but also more recognizable paraphernalia of daily life on the other in order to captivate and fascinate his visitors. The appeal to visitors' emotions, the play on their feelings would encourage them to explore more profoundly the vestiges of Egyptian society, beliefs and daily life. They would thereby leave the museum with a more complete impression of this great but remote earlier civilisation. For Champollion – as de Rougé later – the division of the collections between two distinct spaces represented a lost opportunity to offer a complete panorama of Egyptian civilization. The museum's failings were compounded – again in Champollion's view – by the decision to entrust the decorative scheme to the Louvre's longstanding architects, Charles Percier and Fontaine. For more than twenty years the two men had been responsible for the building work and decorative programmes carried out in the Louvre; throughout this period their architectural and aesthetic authority had gone virtually unchallenged.[91] Champollion, on the other hand, had no such qualms. He suspected, correctly as it turned out, that Napoleon's favourite architects had little or no comprehension of Egyptian art and architecture. He advocated a style that would evoke the objects' provenance and that would plunge the visitors into a suitably Egyptian atmosphere: »Il faut absolument, pour obéir aux convenances et au bon sens, que mes salles soient décorées à l'Egyptienne. [...] les murs et tous les meubles, armoires et tables, doivent être de style vrai Egyptien: c'est le seul moyen de faire bien et de faire du neuf en même temps.«[92] Unfortunately, his requests were to go unheeded.[93] Percier and Fontaine remained faithful to a resolutely classical style of decoration – pilasters topped with Ionic capitals, ornamental features based on antique models and walls clad in marble. There were only scanty allusions to Egypt. The ceiling paintings in two of the four rooms bore some relation to Egyptian themes – Alexandre Abel de Pujol's *L'Egypte sauvée par Joseph* and François-Edouard Picot's *L'Etude et le Génie dévoilent l'antique Egypte à la Grèce*. There was also a series of four panels painted in grisaille by Abel de Pujol based on engravings in the *Description de l'Egypte* (after an Egyptian tomb) and showing scenes from Egyptian life.[94]

The decoration may not have met Champollion's exacting standards, but the rooms were popular. Over the years the museum enlarged and updated its collections, keen to keep abreast of all the most recent discoveries in the field of Egyptology. The Salle des Colonnes was pressed into service as well.[95] Despite these changes, and the large increase in the number of objects on show, Champollion's original *Notice* was not to be updated for many years (until 1855).[96] As a result, the visitors were left to their own devices in front of a large, fairly disparate collection of objects and works of art. Under the rule of Napoleon III, the Louvre expanded quite significantly, especially but not only as a result of the purchase of

the Campana collection. New museums were opening in the former royal palace, such as the Musée américain, the Musée de la marine, the Musée des souverains. It is telling that the important new guide to Paris, prepared in 1867 by Adolphe Joanne to coincide with the World Fair, made only a passing mention to the musée égyptien – just over one and a half columns of type – while the *Paris-Guide* of the same year deigned to devote only twelve lines to it.[97] It is tempting to believe that the musée égyptien had maybe lost some of its allure.

TURIN, ROME

In the meantime, Charles-Felix of Sardinia, Duke of Savoy had not been procrastinating.[98] The contracts confirming the purchase of the Drovetti collection were finally ratified in February 1824; the collection was then shipped to Turin from Livorno where it had been in storage. When the crates and chests containing the precious objects arrived in Turin they were immediately sent to the Palazzo Accademie delle Scienze.[99] Extensive building work was carried out by Giuseppe Maria Talucchi to adapt the building so that it could house these new collections. First attempts were made to organize and classify the collections by Giulio Cordero di San Quintino, the curator of the Egyptian collections. He little appreciated the suggestions made by Champollion, who was staying in the town for some time, keen to study the collections and to use them to confirm his theories and his work on hieroglyphics mentioned ealier in this essay. The Frenchman proposed the project that he was later to apply in Paris, namely a tripartite division of the collections according to their function. He even identified a suite of three rooms on the ground floor which would be, he felt, ideal. He suggested that the large statues should be placed in the centre of each room, presumably so that visitors could walk around them and admire them from all angles. The paintings and steles could be arranged around the walls, and vitrines with smaller objects could be placed between them.[100] Champollion's ideas met with some approval in academic circles in the kingdom, but when the collections were finally put in place it became clear that Cordero di San Quintino's personal antagonism toward Champollion had won out. The collections were divided between two main spaces in the museum. On the ground floor the monumental statues and the large sculptures were to be seen; on the third floor the smaller antiquities filled a series of showcases. The objects were arranged chronologically. And the rooms were scarcely decorated: the walls were painted in a dull green hue, with no attempt at any ornamentation. This sober, rather stark and austere decoration was to remain in place for many years. The Turin authorities clearly felt that rich and colourful decoration, employing Egyptian or Classical reliefs, would divert attention from the collections and from their intellectual substance.

When the Museo Gregoriano Egizio, founded in 1839, opened its doors, it was the result of a lengthy process of gestation.[101] Egyptian objects had been visible in Rome since the Renaissance; collections and study had been pursued gradually over several centuries – especially since the early work of Athanasius Kircher – and there had even been a previous, less

ambitious, Egyptian museum in the Pio-Clementino, dreamt up by Antonio Canova, the Museo Egizio ed Attico.[102] The new Museo Gregoriano Egizio which opened eighteen years later exhibited only Egyptian objects, some of which came from the earlier collections; also on show was a considerable number of recent acquisitions, the fruits of a systematic campaign of purchases, essentially on the Roman antiquities market. Responsible for the classification of the collections was Luigi Ungarelli, who explained in a text that he wrote when the museum opened, that the collections would reveal the development of the four main arts: painting, architecture, sculpture and writing.[103] The objects and works of art were distributed in a series of four rooms, a gallery called the »hemicycle« and five cabinets.[104] The main guiding principle was, once again, that of size. Mummies, sarcophagi, statues, steles and vases were to be seen in the five main rooms, whereas the five cabinets contained a number of vitrines with smaller objects, essentially the vestiges of domestic and civil life, with some religious pieces, and a number of papyri. The speciality of the Vatican collections – the Roman works in imitation of Egyptian originals – were in the second room, named the Sala dei monumenti di imitazione. Above all, the Museo Egizio in the Vatican was decorated in what was described as »Egyptian style«, chiefly thanks to intense collaboration between Ungarelli, Giusppe De Fabris – the director of the Vatican Museum and a sculptor – and the architect Gaspare Salvi.[105] The passage from the first to the second rooms was marked by a pair of massive papyrus columns, with lotus decoration on the capitals. Sitting on top of these was an entablature with an architrave incorporating a model of the one seen at Philae; above this a gouge cornice ran around the circumference of the room. The ceiling was painted in blue, with gold stars picked out on it, which was supposedly a reference to the East. Furthermore, in some of the rooms there were a number of mural paintings showing scenes of Egypt, her lands and her monuments. As one visitor observed, »it is impossible not to be struck, in passing through these chambers, by the admirable harmony between their decorations and contents — the massive architectonic forms, ponderous columns moulded after the types of the Egyptian temple, and deep blue vaults starry like the midnight sky. An atmosphere of venerable antiquity and religious mystery seems to surround us, and by affecting the Imagination prepares the Intellect for a more lively attention to the monuments around.«[106] It is worth noting, in this context, that the Museo Pio-Clementino had taken first tentative steps in this direction at the end of the 18th century. The *Sleeping Cleopatra* (now identified as a *Sleeping Ariadne*) was staged in a niche, before a wall bearing a representation of a palm-tree.[107]

BERLIN, VIENNA

The Roman museum had thus in some ways opened a new chapter in the history of Egyptian collections. For the first time there was a definite attempt to present collections in rooms which offered visitors a »vision« of Egypt. The scenes were certainly stylized, and the models were perhaps not always entirely scrupulously reproduced; nevertheless, this was

a first attempt to sever the seemingly adamantine links binding sarcophagi and Canopic vases with Ionic capitals and Greek-key friezes.

A more daring step was to be taken some years later in Berlin. Twenty years after the work in Paris and Turin the Neues Museum was being planned.[108] The second museum on the Museumsinsel or Museum Island, it was to house a number of distinct departments: plaster casts, prehistoric collections, ethnographic collections, the print room and Egyptian antiquities. These last had earlier been kept in the Schloss Monbijou, under the curatorship of Giuseppe Passalacqua, a merchant from Trieste.[109] Friedrich Wilhelm III had purchased Passalacqua's personal collections in 1828, adding them to the Minutoli collection that he had already bought five years earlier. By way of a sop to Passalacqua, the king offered him the job of curator; over the next few years the Italian organized and oversaw the collections, sorting and displaying them thematically, according to principles which he had already tested when putting his personal collection on show in the Galerie Vivienne in Paris in 1825.[110] The collection grew steadily over the years, until there was no longer enough space in the galleries and cabinets for all the treasures. A three-year Prussian expedition to Egypt (1842–1845) led by Karl Richard Lepsius added a further 1500 objects and countless portfolios of drawings, exacerbating an already critical situation.[111] New premises were required, and it was therefore decided that the Egyptian antiquities would be transferred to the planned new museum.

Officially, Passalacqua was still the director of the Egyptian collections; to all intents and purposes, however, Lepsius was wielding most of the power. Nowhere was this more evident than in the planning of the Neues Museum, and more especially of the Egyptian department.[112] Lepsius had very clear ideas on what he wanted – as had Champollion in Paris some years earlier. But Lepsius was to be far more successful than his French counterpart in imposing his ideas concerning display and scenography. The archaeologist was absent, on an expedition in Cairo, but he sent detailed and unequivocal instructions to Berlin concerning the construction and decoration of the new galleries. »Für die ägyptischen Säle wählen Sie gewiss auch eine ägyptische Architektur, und zwar eine in allen Theilen durchgeführt. […] Ich denke mir nämlich, dass […] die den verschiedenen Zeiten charakteristischen Baustyle, namentlich Säulenordnungen, in ihrer geschichtlichen Reihenfolge festgehalten warden müssten, und zwar in ihrem ganzen reichen Farbenschmuck.«[113] In Berlin, unlike Paris, the decor would complement the collections.

When the Neues Museum opened in 1850, it became clear that Lepsius's advice had been followed. The collections were organized in five principal spaces: a small atrium led to the central Hall of columns (with a contiguous Hypostyle), around which were the historical room, the room of Egyptian tombs and the mythological room.[114] The central hall was a reduced reconstruction of the atrium to the Karnak temple. It was divided into two zones by a series of sixteen richly decorated columns arranged in a rectangle (six columns on the longer sides, four on the shorter ones) around a sunken floor area in the centre of the room. This was reached by going down two steps; here was to be found a number of imposing statues and monuments, and immediately above it was a light-well. On the other side of the

columns, was a walkway running around the circumference of the hall. Various sepulchral steles were aligned along the lower half of the outer walls of this arcade; above them was a series of seventeen scenes of Egyptian temples, pyramids and other monuments by contemporary painters. The contrast between light and shadow, combined with the hefty columns and the painted walls made this a very imposing room, as is clear from contemporary illustrations. The historical room contained a selection of sculptures and showcases with various antiquities, vestiges of the Egyptians' religious, domestic and artisanal activities; here an important series of murals offered a chronological survey of the various periods of Egyptian history. The room of Egyptian tombs contained the most important objects in the collection (»die wichtigsten Schätze«) while the last room, the mythological gallery, included a number of sarcophagi, coffins and statues.[115] In all the rooms the walls were richly decorated; scenes copied from Egyptian tombs, bas-reliefs and hieroglyphic inscriptions covered the walls. The work was carried out by artists who had accompanied Lepsius on his Egyptian expedition; the sketches and drawings they had made in situ served as inspiration.

The new museum attracted much attention, not all of it favourable. Some claimed that the objects and the presentation of Egyptian history were enhanced by the decors and by the rich and atmospheric colours.[116] Lepsius was ostensibly proved correct. Yet, as Lepsius's biographer was to observe, the argument was not so easily won. Many critics apparently felt that this space was so richly and colourfully decorated that the collections – even the most striking remains of Egyptian antiquity – became almost invisible. Visitors were easily distracted, and spent more time admiring the walls of the museum than the showcases and the objects they contained:

> »but the decoration of the rooms in the Berlin museum by no means meets with such universal approbation. It is indeed conceded that it is in the best possible taste, and is both beautiful and attractive, but it is maintained by many people that the pictorial representation on the walls, that is, the accessories, draw the attention of the visitor too strongly and distract him from the contemplation of the monuments, which are certainly the real objects of importance.
> There is some reason for this objection; but yet these pictures serve the immediate purpose of bringing visitors to the collection and it is this very decoration of the Berlin-Egyptian museum which renders it peculiarly attractive.[117]

The debate may, to our eyes, seem remarkably modern, prefiguring the complaints that are so often heard about intrusive exhibition architecture and the praise lavished upon the supposedly neutral »white cube«. It was, however, a grumble that was sometimes heard during this period. For example, when the Louvre reopened its galleries in 1851 after extensive renovation work in both the Galerie d'Apollon and the Salon Carré, several commentators denounced the rich decoration that had been devised by Duban and Simart.[118] The Berlin architecture may have attracted some criticism, but this did not deter the Vien-

nese museum authorities from attempting similar decorative effects in the Egyptian galleries in the new Kunsthistorisches Museum which opened in 1891.[119] The impressive collections which had hitherto been housed in the Baroque Lower Belvedere, suddenly found themselves transferred to rooms which had been decorated to resemble the interior of Egyptian tombs.[120] In the context of a study of Egyptian collections which began with a discussion of the Parisian Exposition Universelle in 1867, it is not uninteresting to examine the history of these decorations. Ernst Weidenbach, a German draughtsman, accompanied Lepsius on his Egyptian expedition.[121] He made many sketches and more detailed drawings at the various sites and monuments that he visited with the expedition, and returned to Berlin with hefty portfolios. The material was to be put to good use over the following years. Immediately after his return to the Prussian capital, Weidenbach began work on the interior decoration of the Egyptian gallery in the Neues Museum. He also collaborated on Lepsius's magnum opus, the monumental and lavishly illustrated *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*.[122] Some years later, he used his drawings from the Prussian expedition when creating a décor for the Egyptian pavilion at the 1873 Wiener Weltausstellung: a series of watercolours on paper representing murals from Beni Hasan.[123] Once the Weltausstellung had closed, the watercolours were taken down, rolled up and sent to the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Almost twenty years later these detailed representations of Khnumhotep II's tomb were to adorn rooms I, II and V in the new Egyptian galleries.[124]

LONDON

In England the situation was very different. The curators in the British Museum were dealing with objects that had originally been selected by the French expeditionary forces for the Musée Napoleon, but which had ended up in London as a result of the vicissitudes of war.[125] Some Egyptian pieces had already graced the galleries before 1802; some had arrived in the museum as part of the founding Sloane Collection, others were the result of later infrequent and irregular acquisitions. They were on show in various galleries, alongside miscellaneous objects or antiquities. However, no attempt was made to create a space dedicated exclusively to Egyptian art and culture. Once the works taken from the French army in Egypt had arrived in London, there was a pressing need for space. Plans were hastily drawn up for a new building in which the Egyptian collections could be accommodated fittingly. But only two years later Charles Townley died and his family sold his important collection of classical statuary to the museum for the paltry sum of £ 20,000. When the new galleries opened in 1808 the newly acquired antique statuary took precedence (and the space was called the Townley Gallery); only two rooms were set aside for the Egyptian collections. One room – the main one – housed the larger sculptures, whilst the smaller ones were on show in an adjoining, much more modest space. The walls were painted in a plain stone colour, without any special decoration or ornamentation. Fifteen years later, the first Salt collection came to

the museum. Space was made for it and objects were moved around. However, once again, just as had been the case since 1808, no special treatment was given to the sarcophagi and sculptures; they were displayed in galleries identical to those which housed Greek and Roman antiquities. Egyptian antiquities were judged – and shown – in terms of the canonical masterpieces of classical Greek and Roman art. It was only during the late 1830s that the display of the Egyptian collections was to undergo any momentous changes.

During the 1830s a large number of objects came to the British Museum as the result of the acquisition of three distinct collections – those of Joseph Sams, of Giovanni Anastasi and the third collection of Henry Salt.[126] These collections – and more particularly that of Sams – were important not only for the quantity of pieces that entered the museum's holdings, but also for their diversity. Joseph Sams, a bookseller, had assembled a decidedly eclectic assortment. He had concentrated not only on sculpture, mummies and sarcophagi, but also on an array of objects relating to daily life. Baskets, dried food, tools, utensils and jewellery were all to be found here. The museum authorities, hitherto slow to accord the Egyptian collections any special treatment, relented. The sculpture gallery on the ground floor would henceforth house the larger statues and the more imposing sarcophagi and monuments. A second gallery, on the first floor, would house more varied collections. But no attempt was made to reassess the interior decoration in these spaces.

The British Museum, which had always refused to offer appropriate decoration in its Egyptian galleries, felt justified in maintaining and defending their conservative display techniques. The »wondrous curiosities«, as the works of Egyptian art were called, were not felt to require any contextualizing decorative features.[127] They stood proudly in galleries which in their arrangement and their decoration were reminiscent of the adjacent Greek and Roman galleries.

In 1854 a new and remarkable exhibition of Egyptian (or Egyptianizing) architecture opened just outside central London, at Sydenham. The Crystal Palace, venue for the 1851 Great Exhibition, was dismantled and relocated from Hyde Park to Sydenham.[128] Its mission was the instruction and enlightenment of the public. It was to be a »source of amusement and instruction acceptable to the masses of the population«. The phrase is undoubtedly redolent of recent museological literature on museums and entertainment, but is actually taken directly from the 1854 catalogue of the new venue.[129] The national press propagated the same idea, hailing a site which combined »amusement and recreation, instruction, and commercial utility«.[130] Inside the reconstructed palace was »a complete historical illustration of the arts of sculpture and architecture from the earliest works of Egypt and Assyria down to modern times, comprising casts of every celebrated statue in the world, and restorations of some of its most remarkable monuments«.[131] This historical illustration of architecture was organized in a series of ten courts – one for each important period or civilization. Among them was an Egyptian court.[132]

Here, in a series of eight spaces, was a compendium of ancient Egyptian art and architecture, created by means of copies and casts. The visitors approached the Egyptian court from

the main nave, passing through a truncated avenue of eight lions, casts of the Prudhoe Lions in the British Museum. Once inside the first courtyard, they could see a number of models of statues of Egyptian pharaohs and not one but two copies of the Rosetta stone. Moving from space to space, they encountered successively a reconstruction of a tomb, various columns, a series of statues of deities and countless reproductions of frescoes showing scenes of Egyptian life and of hieroglyphics. The workmanship was of very high quality and the illusion was perfect, creating a very striking effect. The crowds flocked in to see this corner of ancient Egypt transported to a London suburb. The Egyptian court was generally recognized to be one of the highlights of the new Crystal Palace; it has to be admitted that it benefited also from its central position in the building.

By 1854, London had not only an Egyptian museum – in the British Museum – but also an Egyptian display – at Sydenham. The museum and the pleasure court complemented one another – albeit at a respectable (and respectful) distance. Few complained about the fact that in Sydenham they were seeing copies of many of the genuine artefacts in the British Museum. Instead, people revelled in the chance to »experience« Egypt. A short journey from central London to Sydenham allowed the amateur of Egyptian art to forget the stately museum halls with their Greco-Roman decoration in which the Egyptian collections sat rather uneasily. In Sydenham visitors could sit on the benches that were arranged around the Egyptian court and dream, at least for a while, that they had travelled both many miles and also many centuries back in time and that they were seated in a temple near the banks of the Nile. The illusion was enticing, and it is hardly surprising that Sydenham was to draw in the crowds for many years.

Herein, maybe, lies the answer to Maury's comments about the power and the effectiveness of the Egyptian Park in 1867. Mariette was essentially producing an illusion, which he referred to as a museum. The objects were genuine – in that respect, his »Parisian museum« was closer to the Louvre than to Sydenham. And yet there was a world that separated the two exhibitions of Egyptian art, archaeology, history and culture in Paris. In the Egyptian Park the decor and the antiquities complemented one another perfectly; furthermore, the mural paintings, the architectural elements, the sphinxes offered an ideal setting for the contemplation and examination of the treasures that had travelled from the Bulaq museum. The axes, jewels, sculptures and steles were – in the opinion of several commentators – more understandable and easier to decipher in this setting. Mariette seems thereby to have confirmed Champollion's hunch that these remains of a distant civilization needed to be presented appropriately, in a suitable decor, namely in true Egyptian style (»style vrai Egyptien«). It was thus fitting, even if somewhat ironic, that the tutelary figure of modern Egyptology – the great Champollion – was indeed present in the park: between the *okel* and the temple was to be seen the plaster model of the statue that Frederic Bartholdi had been commissioned to make for the town square in Figeac.[133]

Champollion had been very much in advance of his times. Over the course of the 19th century, as has been seen in this essay, there was a gradual move towards introducing

Egyptianizing decors in public collections. From the first slightly hesitant steps taken in Rome, through to the theatrical, even gaudy – and decried for that very reason – staging in Berlin and Vienna, curators and museum directors experimented with colours and motifs. Egypt was in fashion, and it was essential to ensure that the objects which had been sought after and exported to Europe – often at considerable cost – should be displayed in the best conditions possible. But this did not necessarily entail placing these collections in traditional sober and restrained classically inspired interiors. In fact, quite the opposite; Egypt needed to be orchestrated. This had been understood early on by a group of people who are, it is true, conspicuously absent from this essay, but whose contribution has been studied in some detail over the last few years, namely the private entrepreneurs like Belzoni who staged Egypt in venues such as Bullock's Egyptian hall in 1821.[134] Some years later, in 1825, Passalacqua transported his collection to Paris and exhibited it in the Galerie Vivienne.[135] One of the highlights of his show was the reconstruction of a burial chamber which he had discovered at Thebes two years earlier. All of the objects were present, laid out as they had been when he first opened the tomb.[136] Passalacqua was staging Egypt for his Parisian audience. He was to heighten the illusion even further a few weeks later in a series of rather gruesome performances. Some mummies that he had discovered in Egypt and brought to Paris were opened publicly. The »show« drew the crowds. The Duchesse de Berry was among the spectators, alongside a number of French and European dignitaries, officials and diplomats.[137] The unwrapping of the cloths and the subsequent dissection were carried out under the unwavering gaze of the Champollion brothers. With such important Egyptologists giving their stamp of approval, no one could doubt the authenticity of the objects or the intellectual claims of Passalacqua.

The World Fairs were to build on this tradition, borrowed from both the museum world and the private entrepreneurial shows. In 1867, Mariette offered a lively show in the Egyptian Park, and the crowds loved it. Some years later in Vienna, a similar spectacle was on offer – Egyptian buildings, Weidenbach's decorations and a cast of Egyptian characters, including a viceroy staying in the khedive's palace constructed especially for the exhibition.[138] In Paris, in 1867, some of the most extraordinary treasures from the Bulaq Museum's collections were put on show. Their effect was enhanced by their surroundings – a temple that led the visitor back through the centuries to the Fifth Dynasty (2500 BCE), set within a park that included a palace (vestiges of the medieval period) and an *okel* with its vision of contemporary Egyptian life. On the opposite bank of the Seine stood the Louvre. Its Egyptian collections were housed in neo-classical rooms, whose ceilings were adorned with allegorical paintings. Mummies, sarcophagi, various objects and utensils bore witness to the splendour and magnificence of a long-past civilisation, one that the 19th century public could maybe study but could never hope to experience. Mariette refused this approach. He staged his objects in a magnificent decor, and offered his visitors the chance to experience Egypt on the banks of the Seine: all that they had to do was to accept the idea of participating in this remarkable, fascinating, colourful and strange performance.