

COLNAGHI

PRESS RELEASE

OUT OF THE SAND: ANCIENT EGYPT REDISCOVERED

Colnaghi London — 7 September–17 November 2026

Colnaghi London is pleased to announce *Out of the Sand: Ancient Egypt Rediscovered*, a major exhibition bringing together ancient Egyptian artefacts with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century paintings, drawings, rare books and photographs to examine how Egypt was made, buried, recovered and repeatedly reimagined.

Opening on 7 September and on view through 17 November 2026, the exhibition spans some four millennia and sets objects made by ancient Egyptian hands beside the works produced by later artists, travellers, scholars and photographers who sought to record and interpret the civilisation they encountered.

The exhibition takes its title from the recurring history of Egypt's rediscovery. Egypt was never lost to the Egyptians, yet for successive outside cultures it was found and found again: by Rome after the conquest of Cleopatra's kingdom; by Napoleon's scholars and engineers following the campaign of 1798; by nineteenth-century excavators, painters and photographers; and by the modern museum. Each generation claimed access to the 'real' Egypt while revealing its own ideals, ambitions and ways of seeing.

At the centre of the exhibition is a group of ancient works dating from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman Imperial period. Among the earliest is an exceptionally refined anhydrite kohl vessel carved with two monkeys, made around 2134–1782 BC and exhibited at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, from 1974 to 1996. A finely carved eighteenth-dynasty limestone relief preserves two male figures in profile and offers an intimate glimpse of the courtly visual language associated with Hatshepsut's Theban court. A luminous green faience *Ushabt*i of *Neferibresaneith*, a high-ranking official of the twenty-sixth dynasty, embodies the Egyptian funerary ambition to overcome time: made to answer for the deceased in the afterlife, the figure survives with its ancient purpose and modern history of excavation, museum display and dispersal intact.

These objects are joined by a sculptor's model of a royal bust, a late Ptolemaic cartonnage mummy mask and a Roman marble portrait head of the early Hadrianic period.

The second part of the exhibition follows the visual recovery of Egypt by European artists and image-makers. David Roberts's *Egypt & Nubia*, published between 1846 and 1849, helped establish the monumental and sunlit image of Egypt carried by the Victorian imagination. Maxime Du Camp's *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*, issued in 1852 following his journey up the Nile with Gustave Flaubert, belongs to the earliest generation of travel books illustrated through photography and raises a central question of the exhibition: whether the authority of the camera ever truly displaced the interpretative eye of the artist.

Among the painted highlights is Carl Werner's monumental *At the Temple of Abu Simbel*, circa 1860, in which the colossi of Ramesses II rise in steep foreshortening above the small figures at their feet. Ludwig Hans Fischer's *The Simoon (The Desert)*, circa 1878, offers a darker vision: one of the Colossi of Memnon emerges through a wall of ochre dust as a caravan struggles against the poisonous desert wind.

The exhibition also considers the supposedly objective vision of commercial photography. Antonio Beato's precise view of the pillars at Karnak records what painted and lithographic images had romanticised, while Jean Pascal Sébah's *Ascending the Pyramid* reveals the photograph as a staged construction: a European visitor hauled over the blocks by Egyptian guides, tourism made to resemble exploration. In the work of Hippolyte Délié and Émile Béchar, who photographed the holdings of the newly established Boulaq Museum in 1872, the cycle closes as the newest image-making technology turns its lens upon the oldest objects.

By bringing antiquities into direct dialogue with paintings, printed surveys and early photographs, *Out of the Sand* examines not only the enduring legacy of ancient Egypt, but the history of looking at it. The exhibition does not propose a final or neutral image of Egypt. Instead, it shows how every act of recording is also an act of interpretation, and how a civilisation designed to be remembered has continued to generate new visions of itself across centuries.

Out of the Sand forms part of Colnaghi's broader Oriental Art Department programme and its commitment to bringing cultures into dialogue.

Exhibition Information

Title: Out of the Sand: Ancient Egypt Rediscovered

Dates: 7 September – 17 November 2026

Location: Colnaghi, 26 Bury Street, London SW1Y 6AL, United Kingdom

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am – 6pm

For inquiries: press@colnaghi.com

Website: <https://www.colnaghi.com/>



Carl Werner (Weimar 1808–1894 Leipzig), *At the Temple of Abu Simbel*, c. 1860, signed lower left "Carl. Werner. f", oil on canvas, 190 × 122 cm (74 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 48 in.).



Ludwig Hans Fischer (Salzburg 1848–1915 Vienna), *The Simoon (The Desert)*, c. 1878, signed lower left "Ludwig Hans Fischer.", oil on canvas, 176 x 117 cm (69 ¼ x 45 ¾ in.).



Ushabti of Neferibresaneith, Egyptian, Late Period, 26th Dynasty (Saite Period), c. 570–526 BC, green faience, 19.1 × 5.3 cm (7 ½ × 2 ⅛ in.).



Antonio Beato (c. 1825–1906), *The Pillars of Upper and Lower Egypt, Karnak*, albumen print, 26 × 20 cm (10 ¼ × 7 ¾ in.).