

Echoes of Egypt



Zangaky Brothers, Nile and Pyramid, 1880s.

Towering pyramids and the life-sustaining Nile River, whirling dervishes and professional letter writers, majestic mosques and ancient temples – all these and more have captured the imagination of Europeans visiting Egypt. A new exhibit at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty by showing Egypt as it has been depicted by Europeans over the past few centuries. “Echoes of Egypt,” which was curated by Dan Kyram, consists mainly of paintings, photos, prints, and maps from the private collection he has spent three decades building. The exhibit, which will be on display until the end of 2009, is supplemented by items from the Bible Lands Museum and the Eretz Israel Museum as well as from other private collections.

“Echoes of Egypt” opens with a photograph of the historic meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in March 1979 taken by David Rubinger and then plunges into history.

In 1798, following his failed Egyptian campaign, Napoleon Bonaparte returned to France, leaving behind some 200 researchers, scientists, and artists, whose task it was to document the wonders of that beguiling country. Their portrayals of the pyramids, the Sphinx, and life along the Nile combined with the development of photography and the deciphering of the Rosetta stone sparked an interest in Egypt that lasted for centuries and inspired generations of artists, photographers, and cartographers to travel to Egypt. An

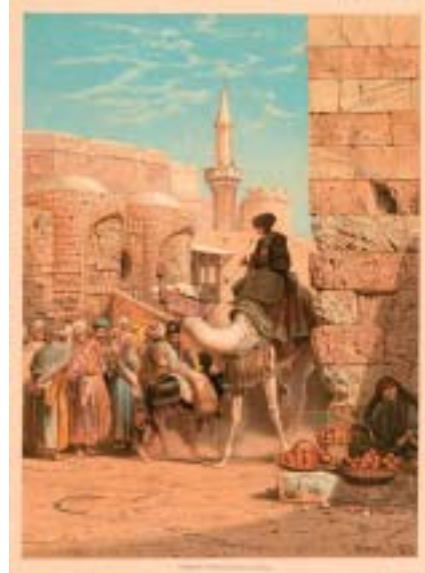
impressive selection of their works is on display at the Bible Lands Museum, providing a glimpse into the time and place when the West first began to discover the magnificence of Egypt. The exhibit sheds light on the first accurate images to be captured and disseminated of the Great Pyramid of Giza, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and many of Egypt’s other unforgettable monuments.

The exhibit is organized by themes, such as pyramids and the Great Sphinx of Giza, landscapes, temples and obelisks, daily life, and geographic regions. Many of the works show how the ancient monuments served as the backdrop of contemporary life in Egypt, depicting the scenes that unfolded underneath them. This provides viewers with a sense of what

Friedrich Heinrich Werner, Street Barber, 1862-1864.



Friedrich Heinrich Werner, Bazaar in Girgeh, 1862-1864.



daily life was like in Egypt at the time as well as a sense of the enormity of the monumental structures.

The exhibit shows many of the unique aspects of Egypt that fascinated Europeans. For example, “The Nilometer of the Island of Rhoda, Cairo,” an 1848 lithograph by David Roberts, reveals how the Egyptians would monitor the level of the river that the city depended upon. Other pictures show people relaxing in a coffee shop and strolling the streets of Cairo.

The lithographs by Friedrich Heinrich Werner (1808-1894), are particularly striking. A German painter who was known for his attention to detail, Werner spent some time exploring Egypt and published a selection of his works in *Sketches of the Nile*. Those on display include “A Coffee Shop in Cairo,” “Street Barber,” and the bazaar in Girgeh.

The different works on display also provide a clear illustration of the different media employed by artists working in Egypt in the nineteenth century. They range from watercolor-like aquatint prints to monotone engravings to colorful lithographs to albumen prints – early photographs printed on thin sheets of paper coated with egg whites. One of the more impressive items on display is the photograph that Francis Frith took of

the sphinx and the pyramids in 1857, only 18 years after the invention of photography.

Selected antiquities from the museum’s collection, such as colorful

inlaid eyes with glass elements from 650-630 BCE, round out the show and provide visitors with additional perspective on Egypt. ■

Heidi J. Gleit



Unidentified Photographer, An Arab Woman, 1880s.