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HIGH MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT MORE THAN 200 MASTERWORKS OF ANCIENT NUBIAN ART

ATLANTA, Jan. 23, 2023 — For more than 3,000 years, a series of kingdoms flourished along the Nile Valley south of ancient Egypt in the Nubian Desert of modern-day Sudan. The High’s upcoming exhibition “Ancient Nubia: Art of the 25th Dynasty from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston” (June 2-Sept. 3, 2023) will feature more than 200 masterworks drawn from MFA Boston’s vast holdings, now the largest and most comprehensive collection of ancient Nubian art and material culture outside of Africa. The works highlight the skill, artistry and innovation of Nubian makers and reflect the wealth and power of their kings and queens, who once controlled one of the largest empires of the ancient world.

“Not only are the objects in this exhibition beautiful examples of artistic achievement, but they also underscore the incredible power and influence of kingdoms that were for many years misunderstood and underappreciated in their historical significance,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High. “We are grateful for the opportunity to help tell this story and to share works with our audience from regions of Africa not extensively represented in our own collection.”

The High’s exhibition will focus exclusively on a later period of ancient Nubian history, the Napata Empire (750-332 BCE), during which Nubia took its place as a world superpower and produced monuments and artworks of uncontested beauty and power. The empire is named for the city of Napata, which served as an important spiritual and trade center for hundreds of years before becoming the ruling capital of the expansive kingdom in the eighth century BCE during the reign of Piankhy, who along with his successors ruled as the 25th dynasty.

The exhibition will include rare artifacts from Napata temples and royal cemeteries, including skillfully crafted pottery; gold and silver amulets; spectacular jewelry of Piankhy’s wives and other royal women; dozens of funerary figurines from the tomb of another ancient Nubian king, Taharqa; and statues of kings Senkamanisken and Akharitene found at Nubia’s holiest site, the “sacred mountain” at Gebel Barkal. Also on view will be more than a dozen plaques featuring cartouches of Egyptian hieroglyphics for King Anlamani. Together, the objects illustrate Napata’s spiritual significance and its military and artistic distinction as the center of power during an important period of Nubian history.

Though many artifacts from their cities, temples, palaces and pyramids exist today, the Nubians left behind few written records. As a result, their story has largely been told by others — in

antiquity by their Egyptian rivals and in the early 20th century by Western scholars who infused their research with prejudice and the modern concept of race. The exhibition will explore how these narratives have evolved over time, reflecting more recent scholarship that has proved ancient Nubia's position as an autonomous nation-state separate from ancient Egypt, with its own sophisticated systems of governance, trade and commerce punctuated by innovations in art, architecture and science.

"This exhibition aims to be corrective," said Lauren Tate Baeza, the High's Fred and Rita Richman curator of African art. "Responding to previous generations of historians and archaeologists who presented racial biases as fact, it seeks to counter colonial-era misattributions of ancient Sudanese artistic and scientific prowess to their neighbors and the lasting relative erasure of early Sudanese civilizations from the canon of ancient history."

The exhibition will be presented on the Second Level of the High's Anne Cox Chambers Wing.

Exhibition Organization and Support

"Ancient Nubia: Art of the 25th Dynasty from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston" is organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

This exhibition is made possible by funding from Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Airlines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters ACT Foundation, Inc., Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, Harry Norman Realtors and wish foundation; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters The Antinori Foundation, Corporate Environments, The Arthur R. and Ruth D. Lautz Charitable Foundation and Elizabeth and Chris Willett; Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Mr. and Mrs. Robin E. Delmer, Marcia and John Donnell, Mrs. Peggy Foreman, Helen C. Griffith, Mrs. Fay S. Howell/The Howell Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, Dr. Joe B. Massey, Margot and Danny McCaul, The Ron and Lisa Brill Family Charitable Trust, Wade A. Rakes II & Nicholas Miller, The Fred and Rita Richman Fund, USI Insurance Services and Mrs. Harriet H. Warren. Generous support is also provided by the Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, The Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy, Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margareta Taylor Exhibition Fund and RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund.

About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 18,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and

self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

About the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), brings many worlds together through art. Showcasing masterpieces from ancient to modern, its renowned collection of nearly 500,000 works tells a multifaceted story of the human experience — a story that holds unique meaning for everyone. From Boston locals to international travelers, visitors from across the globe come to experience the MFA. Through both art and audience, the Museum brings together diverse perspectives—revealing connections, exploring differences and creating a community where all belong. Plan your visit at mfa.org.

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