

Museum Launches World's First King Herod Legacy Exhibit

The Israel Museum in Jerusalem is set to premiere the world's first exhibition on the life and legacy of Herod the Great, one of the most influential—and controversial—figures in ancient Roman and Jewish history.

On view from February through October 2013, the landmark exhibition “Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey” will present approximately 250 archaeological finds from the king's recently discovered tomb at Herodium, as well as from Jericho and other related sites, to shed new light on the political, architectural, and aesthetic impact of Herod's reign from 37 to 4 .

Among the objects on view – all of which have undergone extensive restoration at the Israel Museum for exhibition display purposes – will be three sarcophagi from Herod's tomb and restored frescoes from Herodium; his private bath from the palace at Cypros; never-before-seen carved stone elements from the Temple Mount; and an imperial marble basin thought to be a gift from Augustus.

Lionized as “the greatest builder of human history,” King Herod was also demonized for his uncertain ethnic and religious pedigree; controversial political alliances; the execution of his wife and three of his children; as well as an erroneous association with the New Testament narrative of the “Massacre of the Innocents” in Bethlehem.

“Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey” seeks to provide a better understanding of this ancient figure through the monumental architecture he created and the art and objects with which he surrounded himself. The exhibition will examine Herod's remarkable building projects, complex diplomatic

relations with the Roman emperors and nobility, and dramatic funeral procession from Jericho to the mausoleum he constructed for himself in Herodium. A striking reconstruction of the burial chamber of the mausoleum will be the centerpiece of the exhibition.

In 2007, after a 40-year search, renowned archaeologist Professor Ehud Netzer of Hebrew University in Jerusalem discovered the ruler's tomb at Herodium, on the edge of the Judean Desert. The site included a fortress, palace and a leisure complex with gardens, large pools, decorated bathhouses, and a theatre with a royal box.

In his final years, Herod reconfigured the architecture of the complex to prepare the setting for his burial procession and site, and constructed a magnificent mausoleum facing Jerusalem. The Museum's exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Professor Netzer, who died in 2010 at the site of his seminal discovery.

"Professor Ehud Netzer capped his decades-long excavation of Herodium with his discovery of King Herod's tomb in 2007, and over the past five years, archaeologists excavating the site have made remarkable discoveries that have deepened our appreciation of Professor Netzer's remarkable achievement and enriched our understanding of Herod, his reign, and his role in the history of the region," said James S. Snyder, the Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum.

"We are proud of the extensive restoration work that our conservation staff has been able to complete and thrilled to present these important finds to the public, for the first time, in an exhibition that will illuminate a pivotal period in the history of the Land of Israel," he added.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive 250-page catalog issued by the Israel Museum, featuring the first publication of the tomb complex and other discoveries from

Herodium. The catalog will also include scholarly articles on Herod's life and the legacy of Herodian architecture, written by Professor Netzer before his death in 2010, and by other leading experts in the field.