

GODDIO'S FINDS ON DISPLAY: COLOSSAL STATUES FROM THONIS-HERACLEION NOW IN THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

Schaan (FL), July 12, 2023 – Two colossal statues retrieved by Franck Goddio and his team from the ancient sunken city of Thonis-Heracleion (Aboukir Bay), are now on display at the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, near Cairo. They are part of one of the world's largest underwater archaeological research projects, supported by the Hilti Foundation.

The two approximately five-meter-high statues of a Ptolemaic king and queen, made of pink granite, were recovered from the sea off the Egyptian coast by the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology (IEASM) under the direction of Franck Goddio. This underwater archaeological research project began more than 25 years ago and continues to this day. For the Hilti Foundation this project, which began in 1996, marked the starting point for its commitment to what was a relatively young science. The support of Franck Goddio's pioneering work led to the discovery of ancient civilizations that had lain hidden for millennia under meter-high layers of sand and sediment on the seafloor.

"The support of the Hilti Foundation is essential to the success of our work in Egypt," says Franck Goddio, "Without it, we would not be able to explore this huge marine zone of about 110 square kilometers and make all the discoveries."

And the commitment has paid off. The artifacts that Franck Goddio and his team have been bringing to light these many years, with meticulous work and the use of the latest technologies, exceeded all expectations. Oxford University has also been a partner in Goddio's work for 20 years and collaborates on the various scholarly studies and publications surrounding the many recovered items. However, these have not only captivated the scientific world, but also a broad public. Several traveling exhibitions of the "Sunken Treasures of Egypt" have already thrilled millions around the globe.

Michael Hilti, Member of the Board of the Hilti Foundation, is delighted about the new exhibition of the colossal statues at the Grand Egyptian Museum: "It makes us very happy that the queen and king from Thonis-Heracleion are now part of one of the largest archaeological museums in the world. It is exactly what we want to achieve with our commitment: To break new, successful ground in the study of past civilizations and to make the discoveries, knowledge and lessons learned accessible to all."

Before the founding of Alexandria in 331 BC, Thonis-Heracleion served as Egypt's largest port. The city was also one of great religious and political importance. The Osiris procession was held annually in the city's temple of Amun, ensuring the continuity of the pharaoh's rule. Several earthquakes were followed by tidal waves, which in turn triggered liquefaction, causing large areas of the Nile Delta to sink into the sea, with them the city of Thonis-Heracleion. It was buried for millennia and only rediscovered by IEASM in 2000.

The Grand Egyptian Museum, which houses the largest collection of Egyptian antiquities, is scheduled to officially open at the end of the year. However, small, guided groups are already allowed to visit the Great Hall of the future museum and view the colossal statues.

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Information on viewing opportunities can be found on the Grand Egyptian Museum's visitor website: <https://www.visit-gem.com/en/home>

Further information on the Hilti Foundation's commitment to underwater archaeological research in Egypt can be found here: <https://www.hiltifoundation.org/maritime-archaeology-franck-goddio>

The Hilti Foundation

The Hilti Foundation is a non-profit organization that aims to contribute to a better future. With its clearly focused priorities of "Music for Social Change", "Affordable Housing & Technology", "Economic Empowerment" and "Emergency Relief", it is committed to areas that are among the great global challenges of our time. By supporting the work of Franck Goddio and the IEASM, the Hilti Foundation has been making a lasting contribution to innovation in underwater archaeological research since 1996, combined with the aim of making the results accessible to both experts and the wider public. The Hilti Foundation is jointly funded by the Hilti Family Foundation and the Hilti Group. www.hiltifoundation.org

European Institute for Underwater Archaeology (IEASM)

The IEASM was founded in 1987 as a French non-profit organization by its president Franck Goddio. The aim of the institute is to locate, research, excavate and restore submerged sites. IEASM collaborates with scientists and experts from different scientific disciplines in its research missions and in the study and publication of the results. In addition, IEASM organizes exhibitions to give the general public access to the discoveries.

www.ieasm.org