**Egypt’s Rubbishes Claims that Nefertiti Bust is ‘Fake’**

By Christopher Szabo.

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Zahi Hawas, Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities has rejected as unfounded the claim by a Swiss art historian, Henri Stierlin, that the Nefertiti’s bust is a fake.

Speaking to [Al Arabiya,](http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/05/09/72373.html) Hawas, who is known in historical and archaeological circles for his tirades, snapped: "Stierlin is not a historian. He is delirious."

Hawas refuted Stierlin’s arguments point by point. The Swiss art expert had argued that "Egyptians cut shoulders horizontally," and that the Nefertiti bust’s features recalled Art Nouveau, the style current in Europe at the time, Hawas argued that the era of Akhenaten and his wife, Nefertiti, had been known for introducing a new type of art form.

Akhenaten is renowned by historians for his belief in one God, Aten, and his refutation of ancient Egypt’s myriad gods and goddesses. Some believe the ancient Hebrews might have been inspired in their belief in one God by this revolution in religious thinking.

Hawas further refuted the claim that the bust’s missing left eye would have been insulting to Egyptians of the time, so it could not have been genuine. The head of Egypt’s Antiquities Council said:

The royal sculptor Tohotmos made it with two eyes, but one was later destroyed.

Hawas also responded to Stierlin’s criticism of the way the discovery of the bust was reported and shipped to Germany. Stierlin said the German archaeologist:

Didn't even bother to supply a description, which is amazing for an exceptional work found intact.

The earliest journal report appeared in 1923, 11 years after its discovery by German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt. Hawas agreed with the facts of the report, but argued that French archaeologists in charge of Egyptian artefacts at the time were not at Tel al-Amarna when the find was made.

Stierlin said the discoverer ”knew it was a fake.” The Swiss art historian added:

He left the piece for 10 years in his sponsor's sitting room. It's as if he'd left Tutankhamen's mask in his own sitting room.

Hawas disagreed, but also added that he would soon reveal what actually happened:

Borchardt made a detailed report about the bust and it was amazing how accurate his description was. Very soon I will uncover the details of how the bust was smuggled outside Egypt because we want it back where it belongs."

Hawas is passionate about getting all Egyptian artifacts back to Egypt, but the issue is a fraught one. Should the return of artefacts become general, museum curators argue, treasures might be returned to countries not able to look after them, such as Afghanistan.