

G3 (week 1, Friday morning)

The material culture of gender in AE - representations

HPAH5013/6013 – Gendered Lives in Ancient
Egypt

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And in Ancient Egypt?

- ❑ How might we distinguish true eroticism from representations of fertility?
- ❑ What might some of the icons of female & male sexuality be?
- ❑ Egyptian constructions of eroticism, obscenity, and sexuality are quite different than ours. How do they differ?
- ❑ How is that presented?





Egyptian Art

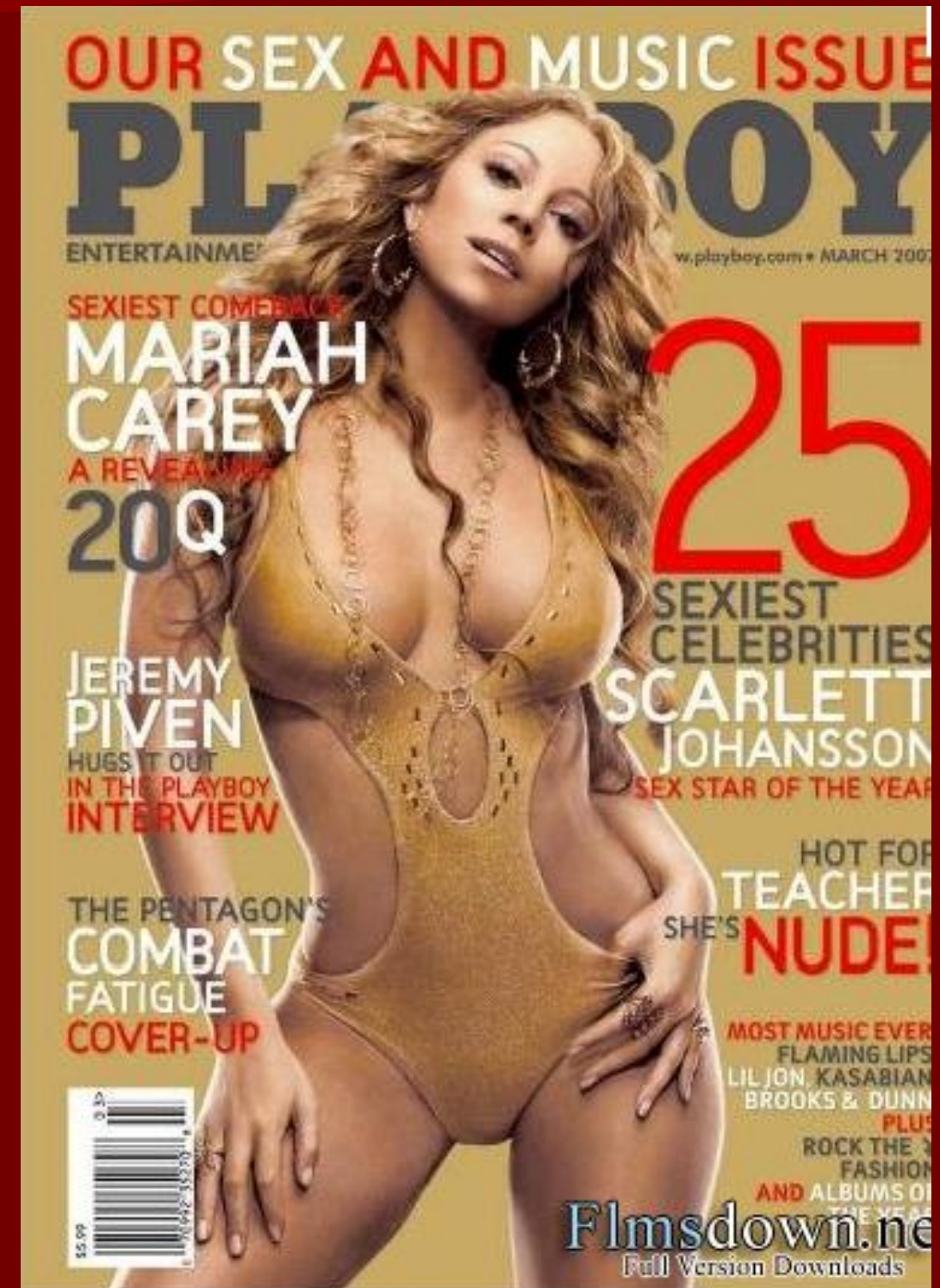
- Egyptian **formal art is symbolic, not meant to represent reality** → an ideal world.

Gender (Re-)Presentations

The real world?



“My Body Is Not an Ornament” - movement





My Body Is Not an Ornament????

- ❑ Eroticizing ancient Egyptian women?
- ❑ NO (not in our sense anyway...)
- ❑ visual art is coded
- ❑ will be comprehensible to others of that society
- ❑ codes & symbols are culturally specific

CODES → DECORUM

- ❑ Eroticizing ancient Egyptian women?
- ❑ NO (not in our sense anyway...)
- ❑ visual art is coded
- ❑ will be comprehensible to others of that society
- ❑ codes & symbols are culturally specific
- ❑ DECORUM
 - representations follow specific conventions – unwritten rules
 - ❑ → you don't show a picture of the queen on the toilet

How does this correlate with...

- Yoko Ono:
- “the spirit of art is to express the truth”
- But is this always true?



art definition



Web

Images

Videos

News

Shopping

Maps

Books

About 400,000,000 results

Any country

Country: the UK

Any time

Past hour

Past 24 hours

Past week

Past month

Past year

art¹ /ɑ:t/

noun

1. the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.
2. the various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance.
3. subjects of study primarily concerned with human creativity and social life, such as languages, literature, and history (as contrasted with scientific or technical subjects).
4. a skill at doing a specified thing, typically one acquired through practice.

art² /ɑ:t/

archaic or dialect second person singular present of be.

art.

abbreviation

article.



Art – Fine Art?

Fine art is not eternal and constant but culturally dependent. As such it has been produced, described and explained in different ways. Antiquity did not have the concept of Fine Art. Not until the eighteenth century was there such a concept to distinguish Fine Art from other human activities, such as craft or science, and their products. Before that, there were no artistic concepts and no language to describe, explain and interpret the production and uses of works of art in a modern sense. But, of course, people have always made paintings and sculptures, played music and danced, told stories and dramatized them in various ways. But these modes of activity have served in vastly different kinds of situations and have been characterized and understood in many ways, not only as works of art.



Possible purposes of art

Ceremonial - ritual, celebration, artworks created to support worship ceremonies

Artistic expression - artwork to express or communicate emotions, ideas, feelings or to beautify objects

Narrative - artworks that tell stories, describe and illustrate experiences

Functional - artistic objects used in everyday life that serve an actual purpose

Persuasive - artworks that promote ideas, philosophies, or products



Egyptian art and Art Theory

- ❑ Egyptian artisan bound by conventions and the client
- ❑ BUT once mastered rules = free to bend rules to his vision
- ❑ Egyptian art = portrayal of Egyptian cultural idea of the world with its own sense of time and space and its own realism
- ❑ Aspective Egyptian Art = product of the collective perceptual attitude and creative solutions to the various problems present in representing three-dimensional images

Perspective and „aspective“ view of a box

Box from the tomb of Sennedjem, New Kingdom, reign of Ramesses II, ca. 1279–1213 B.C.



Box containing a necklace, tomb of Rekhmire (TT100)

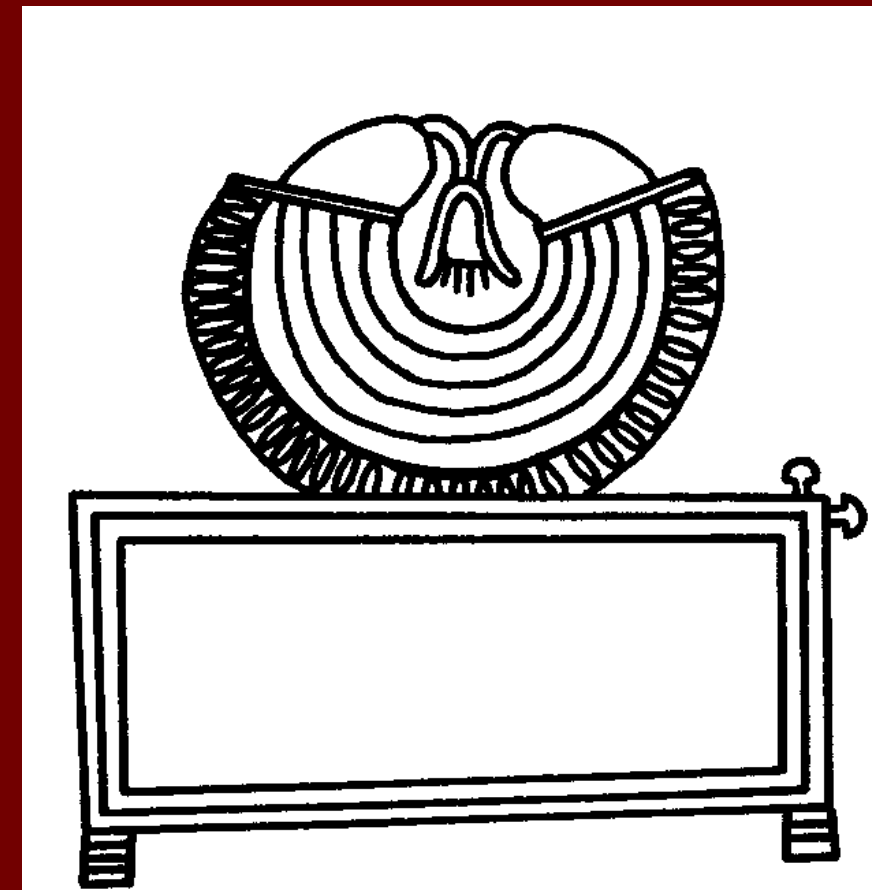


FIGURE 1.1
Representation of a box containing a necklace, TT 100,
eighteenth dynasty, after Davies 1943, Plate 90.

Conventions of Egyptian art:

Perspective - aspective

- ❑ Egyptian art: non-perspective, spaceless, flat, not realistic → misconception on the nature of Egyptian art
- ❑ Not perspective (today considered a requirement for naturalistic pieces of art)
- ❑ to eye unused to conventions of Egyptian art: looks almost childish



Conventions of Egyptian art:

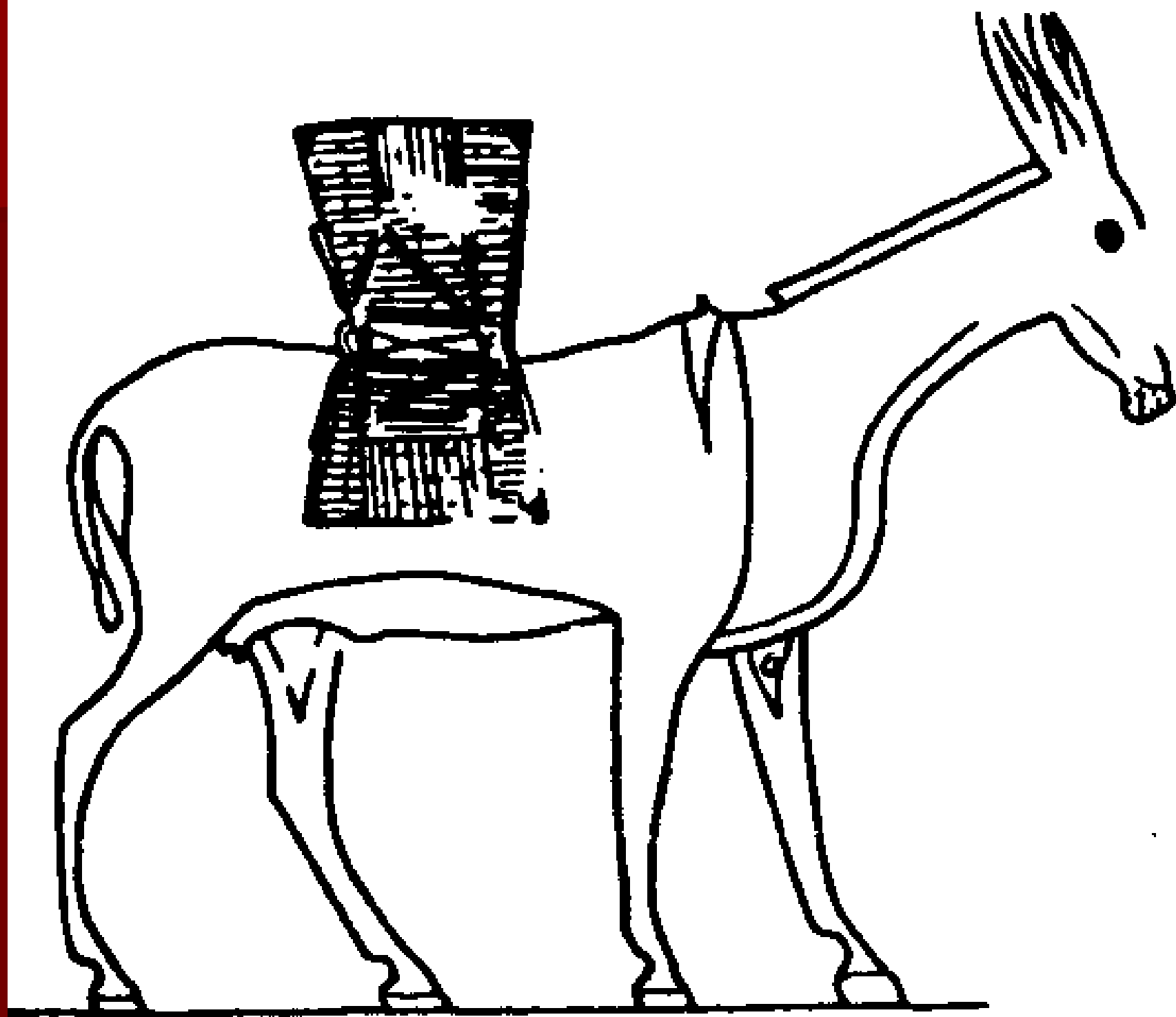
Perspective - aspective

- use of baseline upon which all figures stand
- divided into registers of (mostly) equal height and length
- figures are a amalgamation of different views of different body parts
 - a side view of head
 - front view of torso, etcetera
- → combination of views = product of the Egyptian solution to the problem of reproducing a three-dimensional figure on a two-dimensional surface

Conventions of Egyptian art:

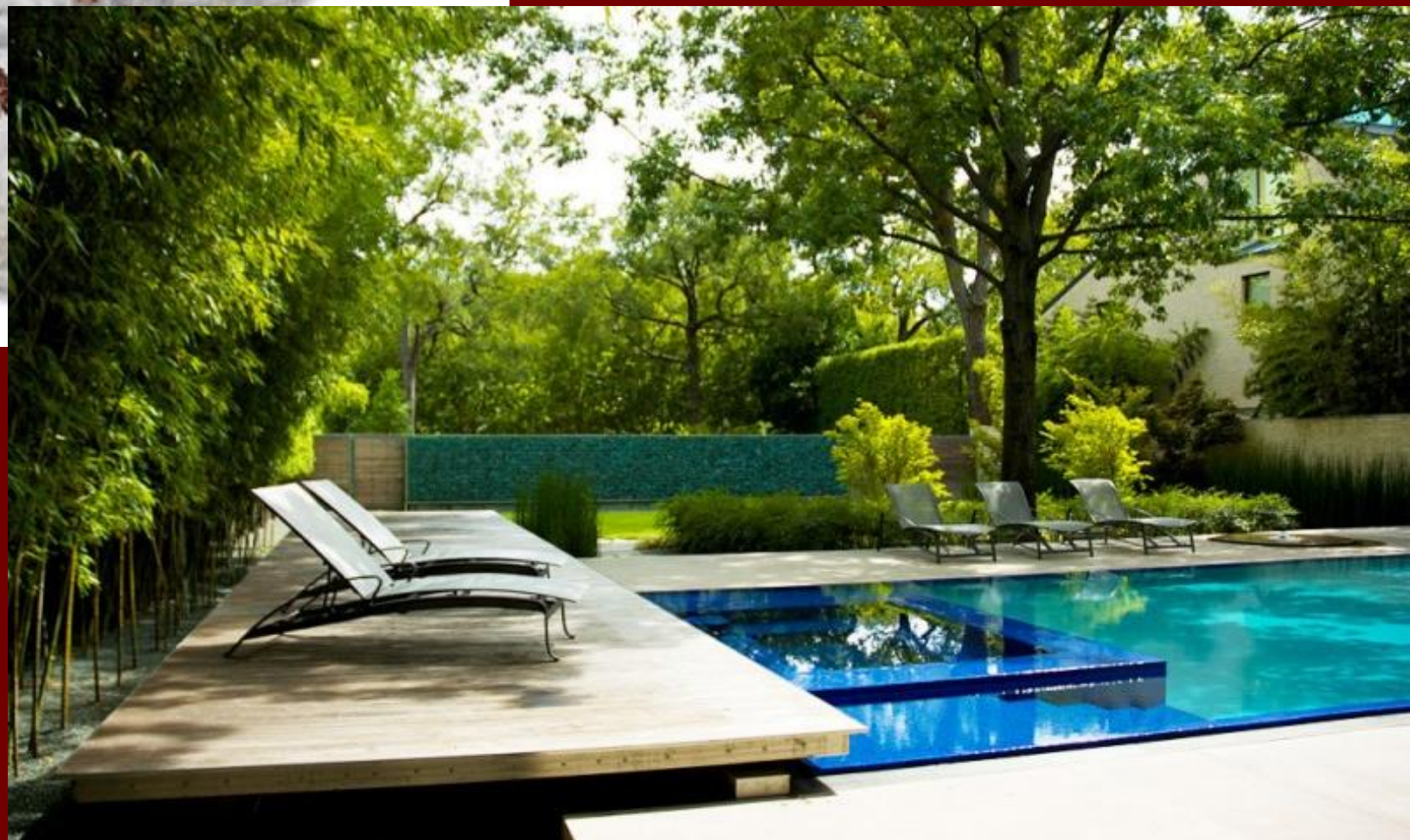
Perspective - aspective

- ❑ → combination of views = product of the Egyptian solution to the problem of reproducing a three-dimensional figure on a two-dimensional surface
- ❑ German Egyptologist Emma Brunner-Traut developed term to describe this phenomenon: ASPECTIVE
- ❑ = perceptual attitude (like perspective), based on same in the underlying thought (and while they are different in execution they are the)
- ❑ Be aware: lack of conventional perspective doesn't mean *without space*





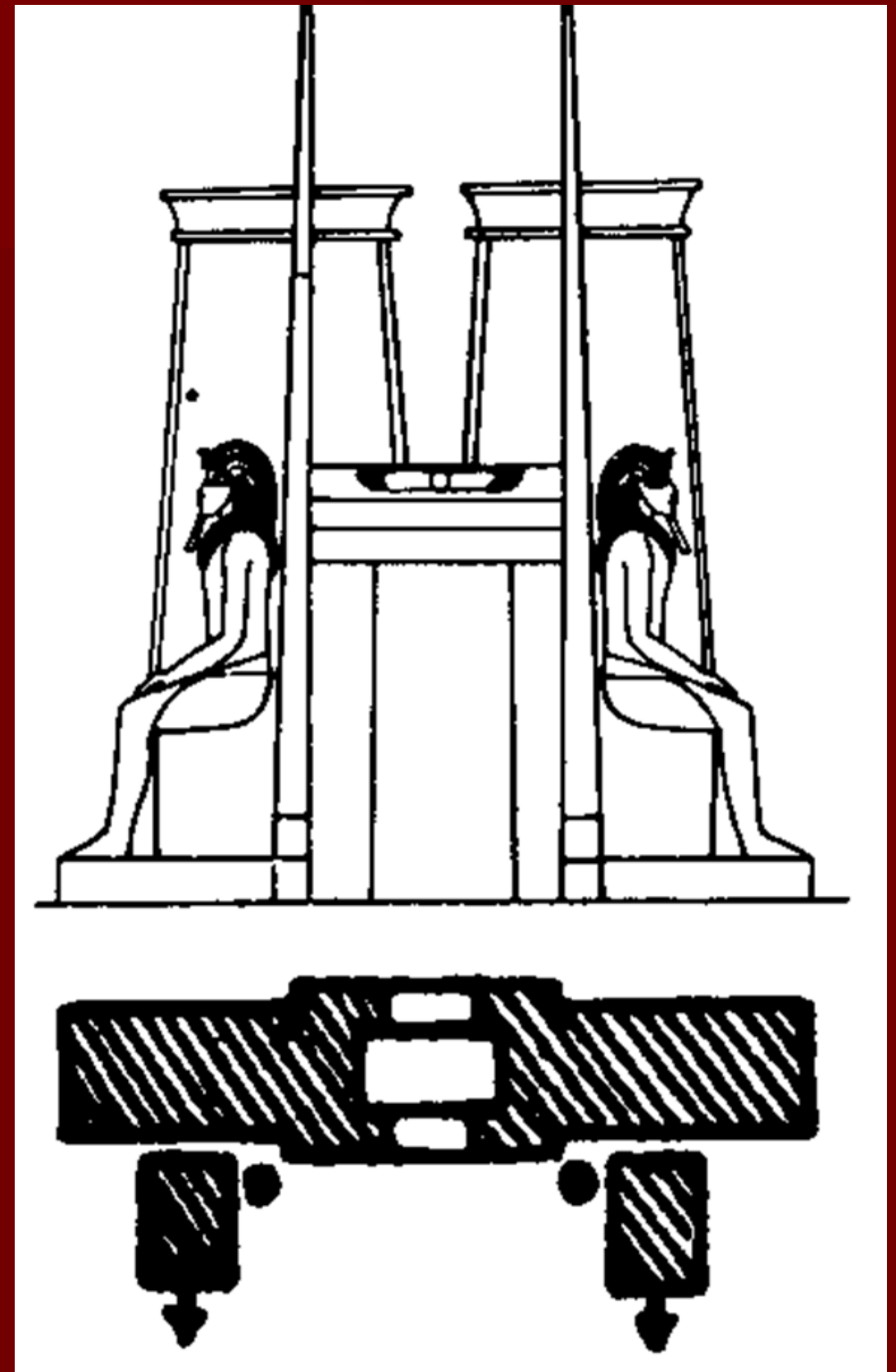
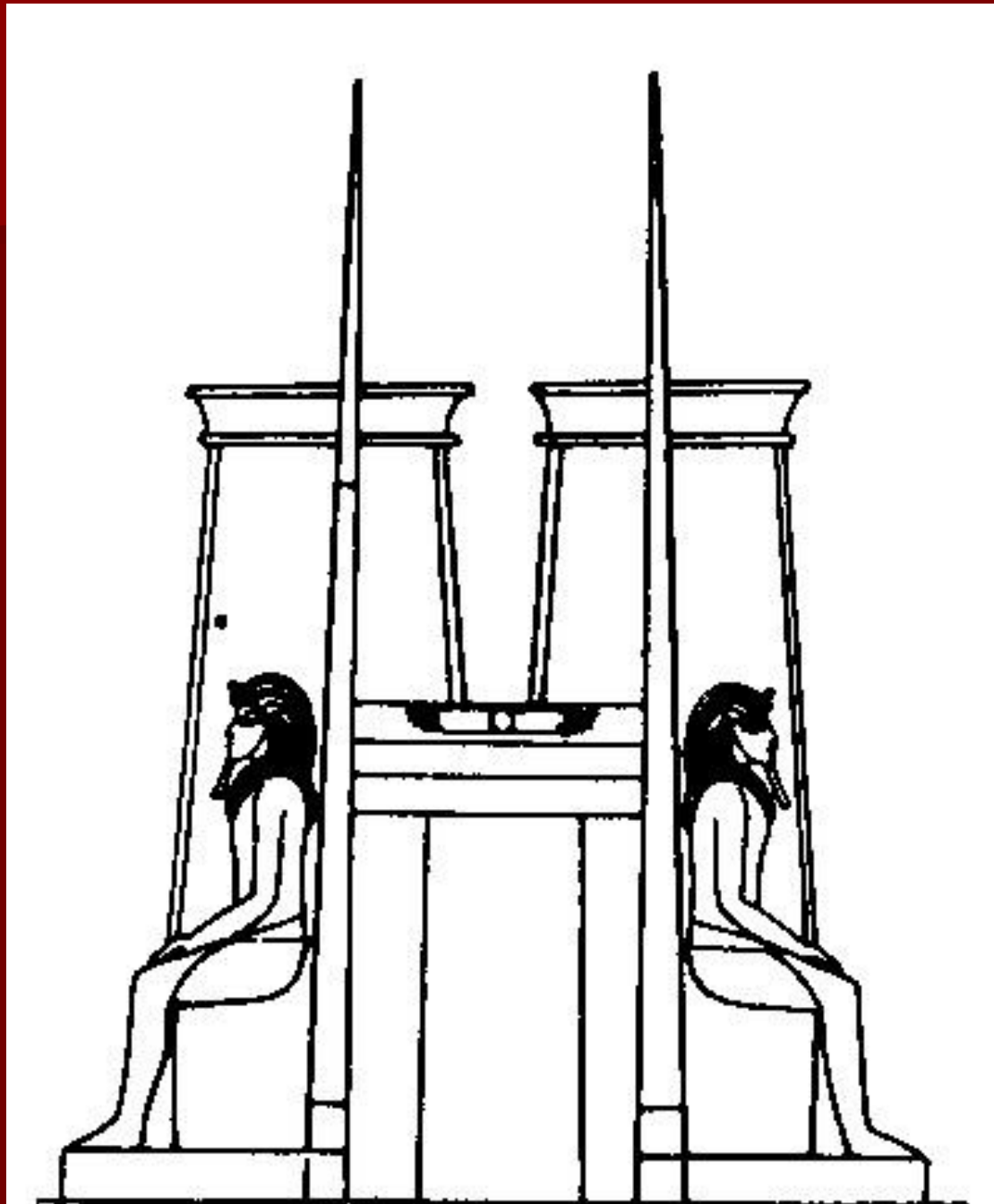
TT ?
Nebamun:
Garden pool

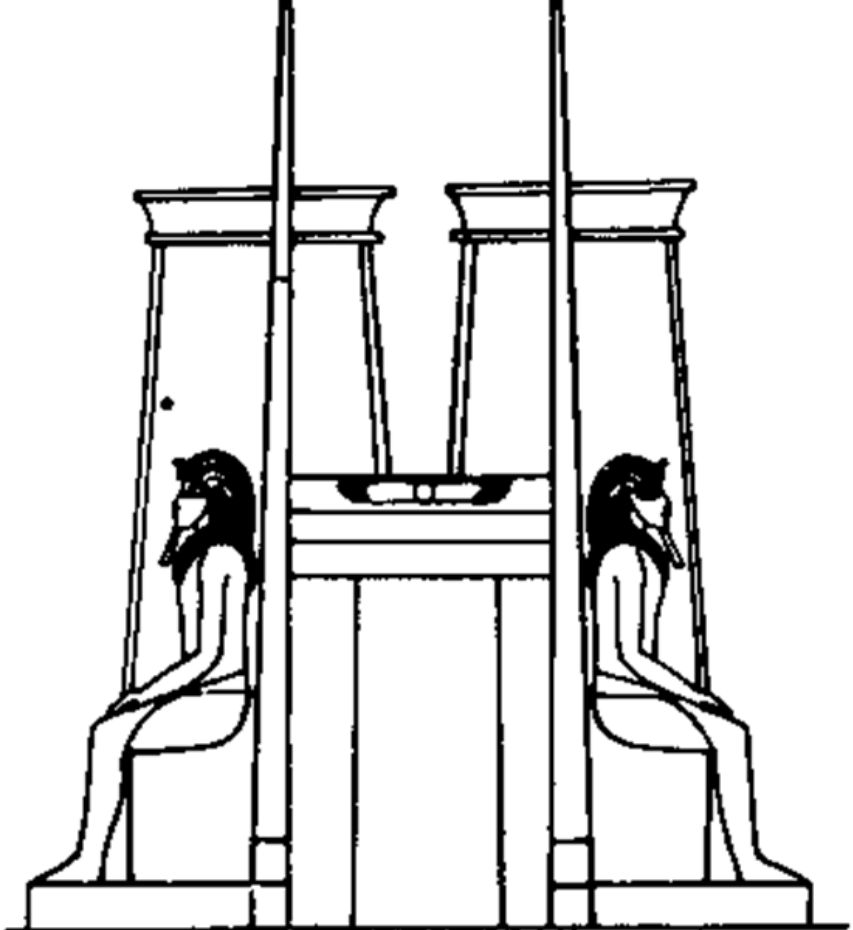


TT ? Nebamun: Garden pool (details)









Perspective / aspective of Atef crown



Egyptian style of statues and reliefs



- The artist who carved the three-dimensional statue on the right could show the human figure from all angles -- front, back, and sides.

Egyptian style of statues and reliefs

three-dimensional



two-dimensional



Egyptian style of statues and reliefs

two-dimensional

- But representing a figure on a flat surface, as in the wall relief at the left, is a more complicated problem.
- Legs in profile demonstrated movement. A head in profile outlined the features clearly.

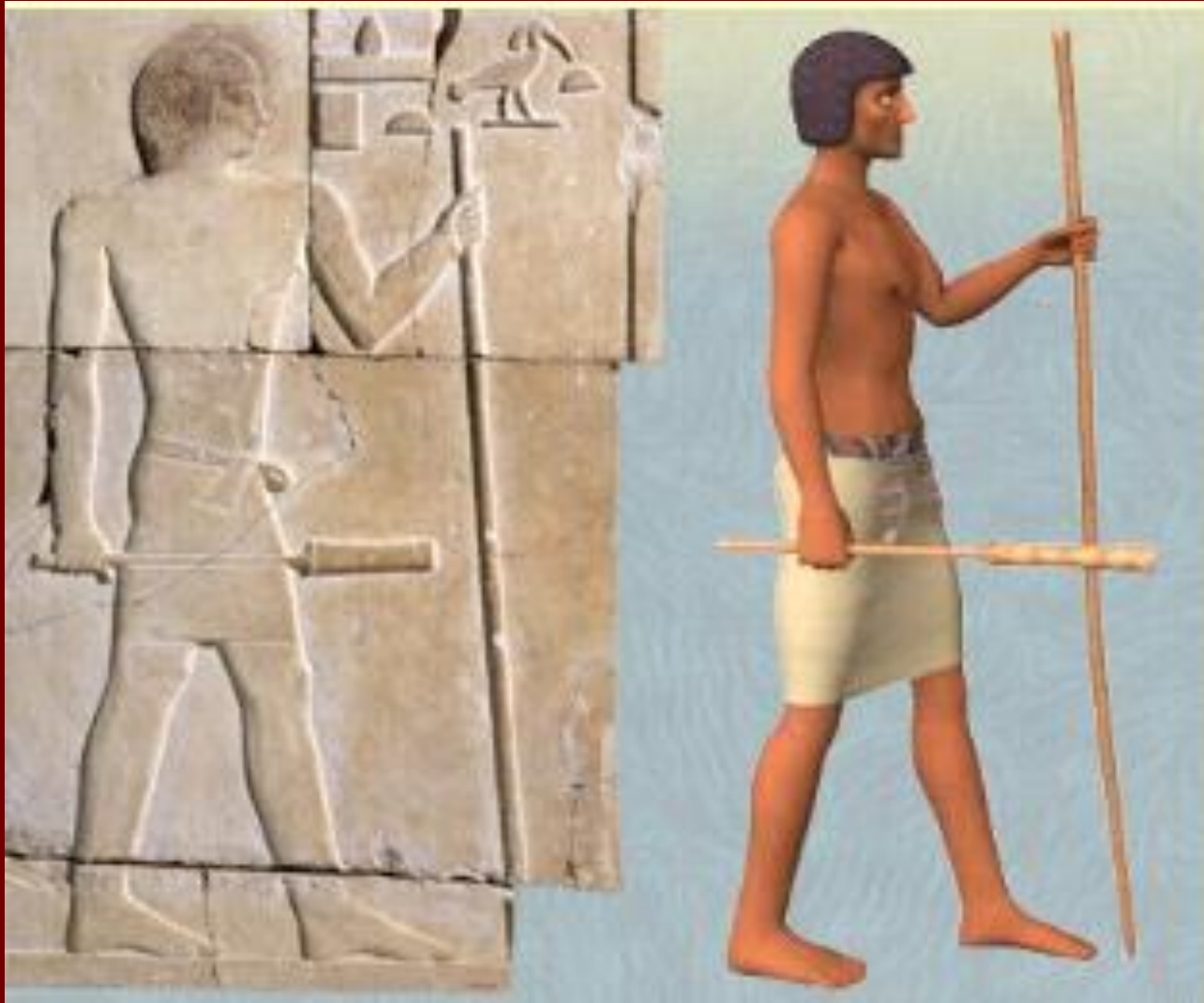




A frontal torso emphasized broad shoulders.

PS: Three-quarter view was not used at all





The artist drew Akhty-hotep's mouth and nose in profile, but showed his eye from the front.



Akhty-hotep's shoulders and arms are shown from the front, but one breast and nipple are shown from the side.



Akhty-hotep has two left feet. Egyptian artists depicted an object—such as a foot—by showing its essential elements. In this case, the big toes and arches of both of feet are visible, even though in reality only the far foot would appear this way.

Art of ancient Egypt

- ❑ uniquely stylized and symbolic
- ❑ connected with hieroglyphs as visual language
- ❑ followed specific rules in order to be read and understood
- ❑ artists not concerned with creating highly realistic images but followed a system called the Canon of Proportions to represent an ideal and harmonious version of reality

Iconographic descriptions of artefacts

- Iconography
 - pictorial material relating to or illustrating a subject
 - traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject (religious, legendary)
 - **ICONOGRAPHY AS VISIBLE RELIGION**
 - imagery or symbolism of art
- Description
 - account – what do you see?
 - Explanation – how do we have to understand this?
 - Narrative – what are the cultural ideas behind that?
- Artefact

B014274



Photo Scala, Florence/BPK, Bildagentur fuer Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, B

Code: B014274

Artist: *****

Title: Bildhauermodell einer Sphinx. 664 - 332 v. Chr.

Location: Aegyptisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

City: Berlin

Country: Germany

Period/Style: Not available

Genre: Not available

Note: Kalkstein (Spätzeit). Objektmaß 26,7 x 19 cm. Inventar-Nr.: ÄM 22445. Foto: Margarete Büsing

Credits: Photo Scala, Florence/BPK, Bildagentur fuer Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin

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FIGURE 7.16
Front of block with sketch of front of statue imposed, Ptolemaic period, Berlin inv. no. 3/70.

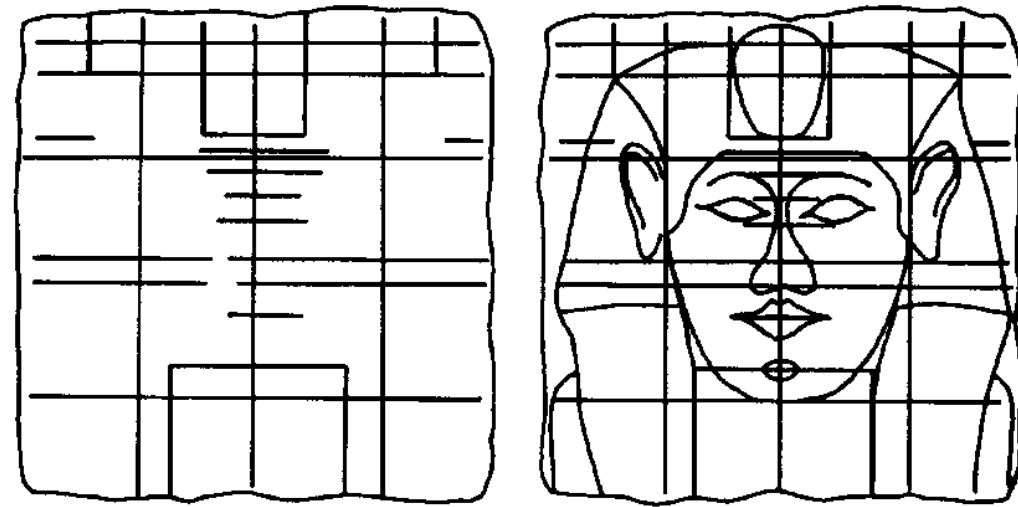


FIGURE 7.17
Side of block with sketch of side of statue imposed, Ptolemaic period, Berlin inv. no. 3/70.

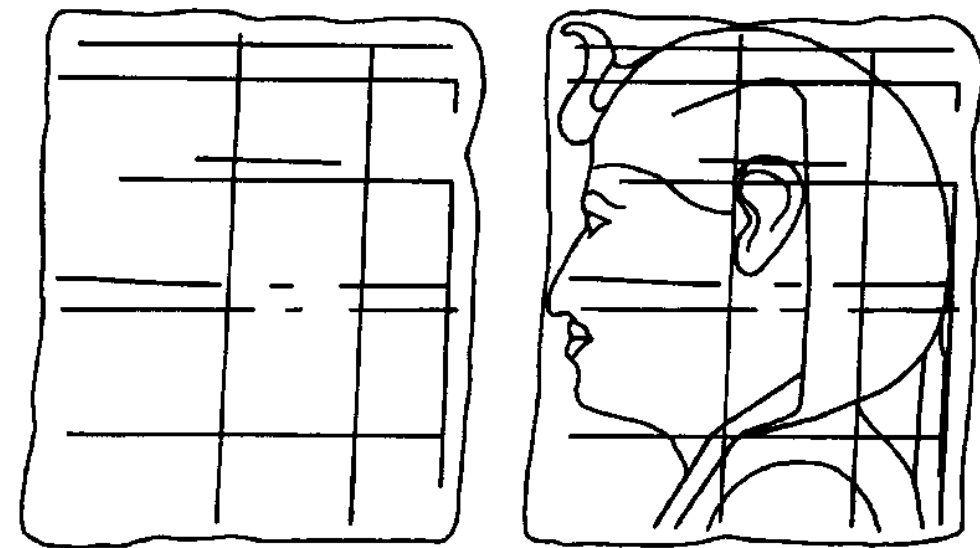
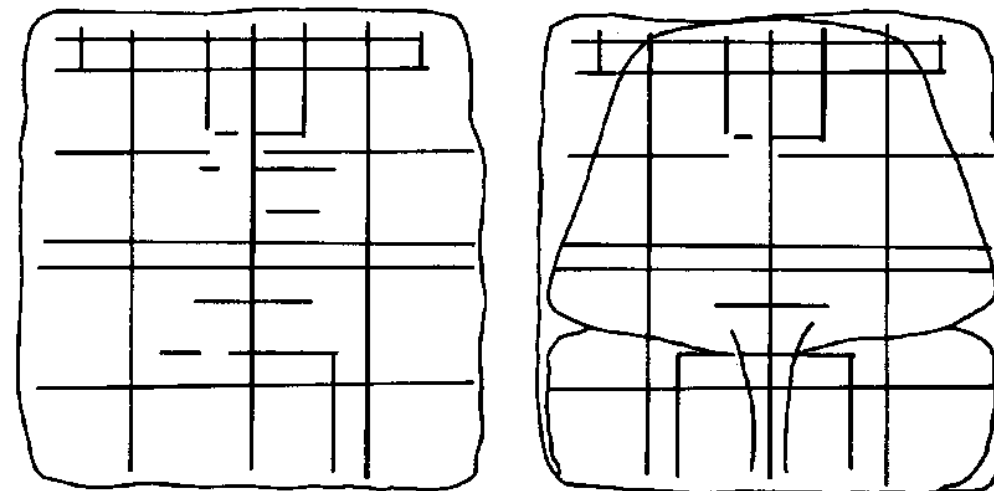


FIGURE 7.18
Back of block with sketch of back of statue imposed, Ptolemaic period, Berlin inv. no. 3/70.



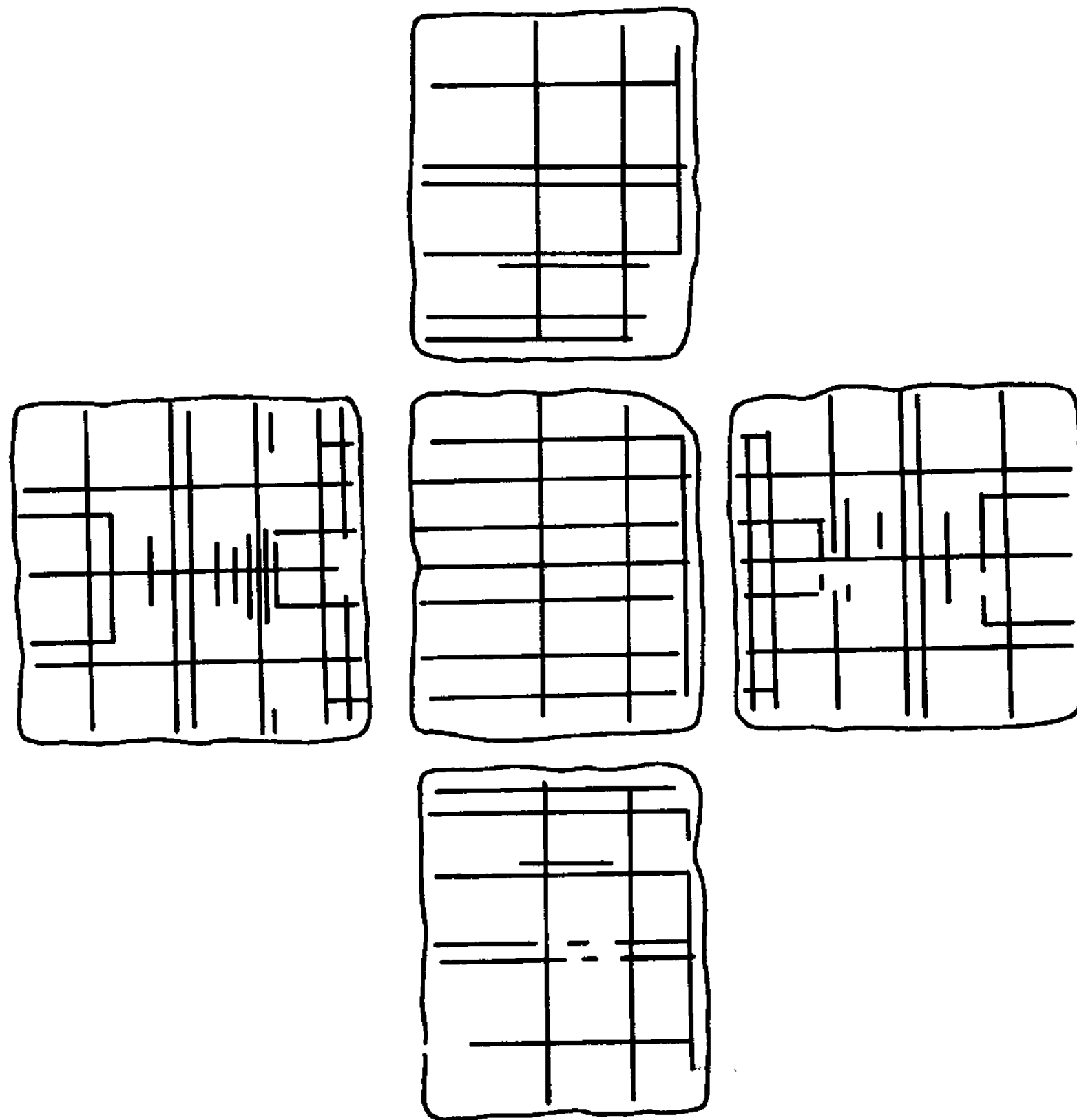
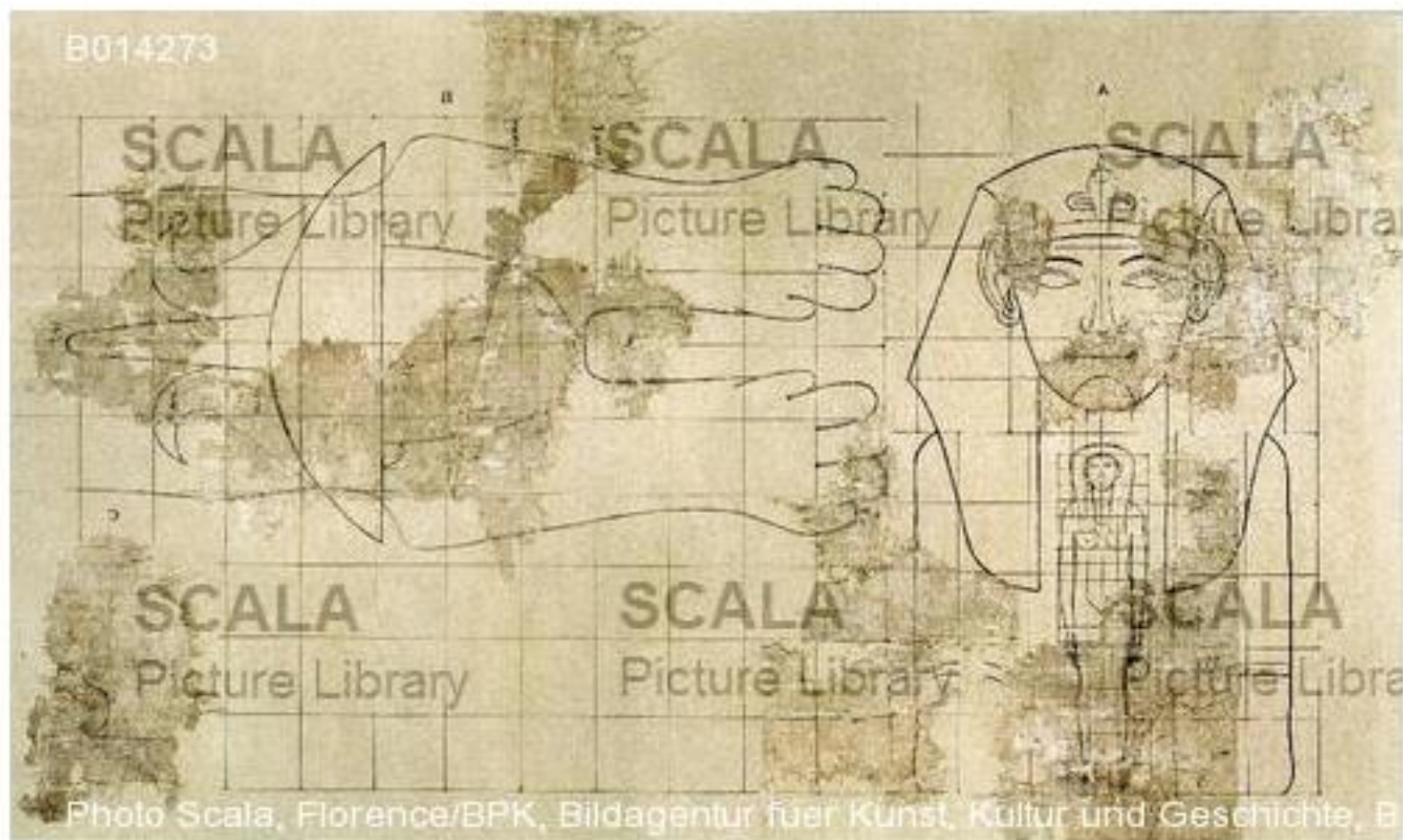


FIGURE 7.15
Block laid out for sculpture, Ptolemaic period, Berlin
inv. no. 3/70.



Code: B014273

Artist: Egyptian art

Title: Papyrus mit Sphinx-Vorzeichnung.
304-282 v. Chr.

Location: Aegyptisches Museum,
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

City: Berlin

Country: Germany

Period/Style: Not available

Genre: Not available

Note: Papyrus (Ptolemaios I. Sotêr (Soter)
(304 - 282 v.Chr.)). Objektmaß 57,2 x 33,7
cm. Inventar-Nr.: P 11775/A-B

Credits: Photo Scala, Florence/BPK,
Bildagentur fuer Kunst, Kultur und
Geschichte, Berlin

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Canon of Proportions

- ❑ system used to depict an idealized version of reality
- ❑ applicable to only the figures within an artwork and not the artwork as a whole (this is following the principle of importance)

Proportional grid lines

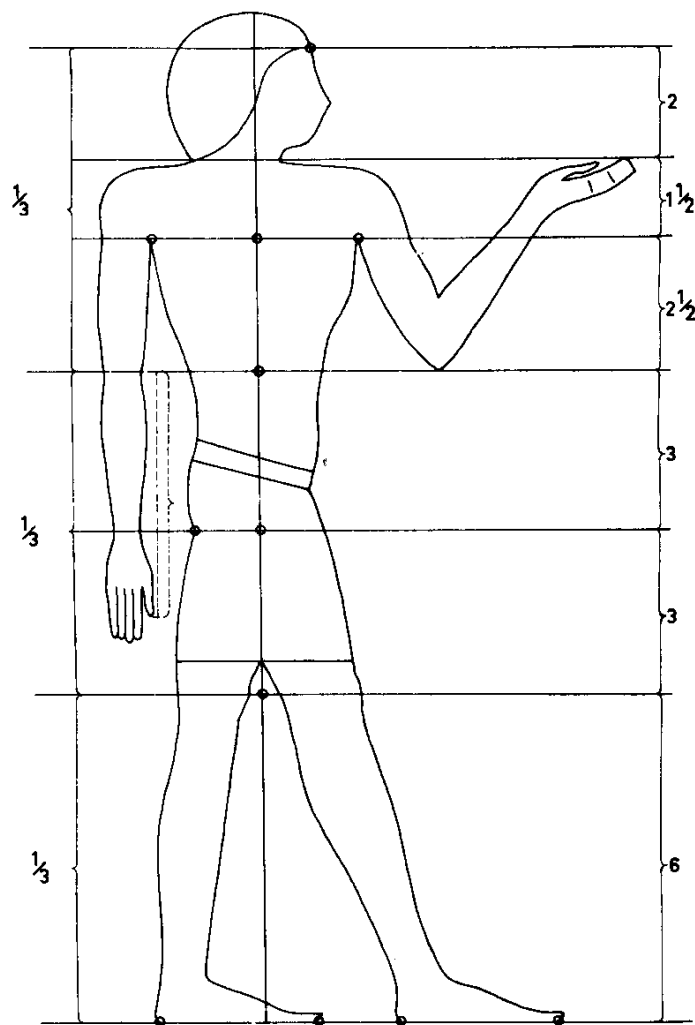


Abb. 16: Der Kanon des Alten Reiches

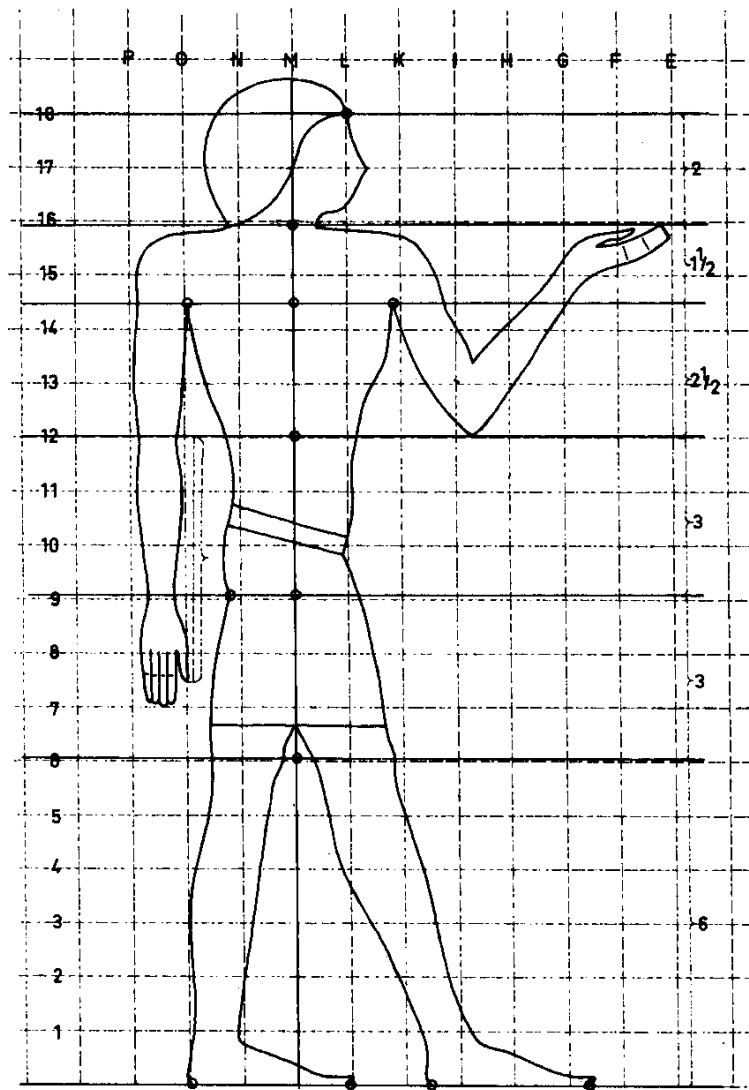


Abb. 17: Der Kanon des Mittleren Reiches, Standfigur

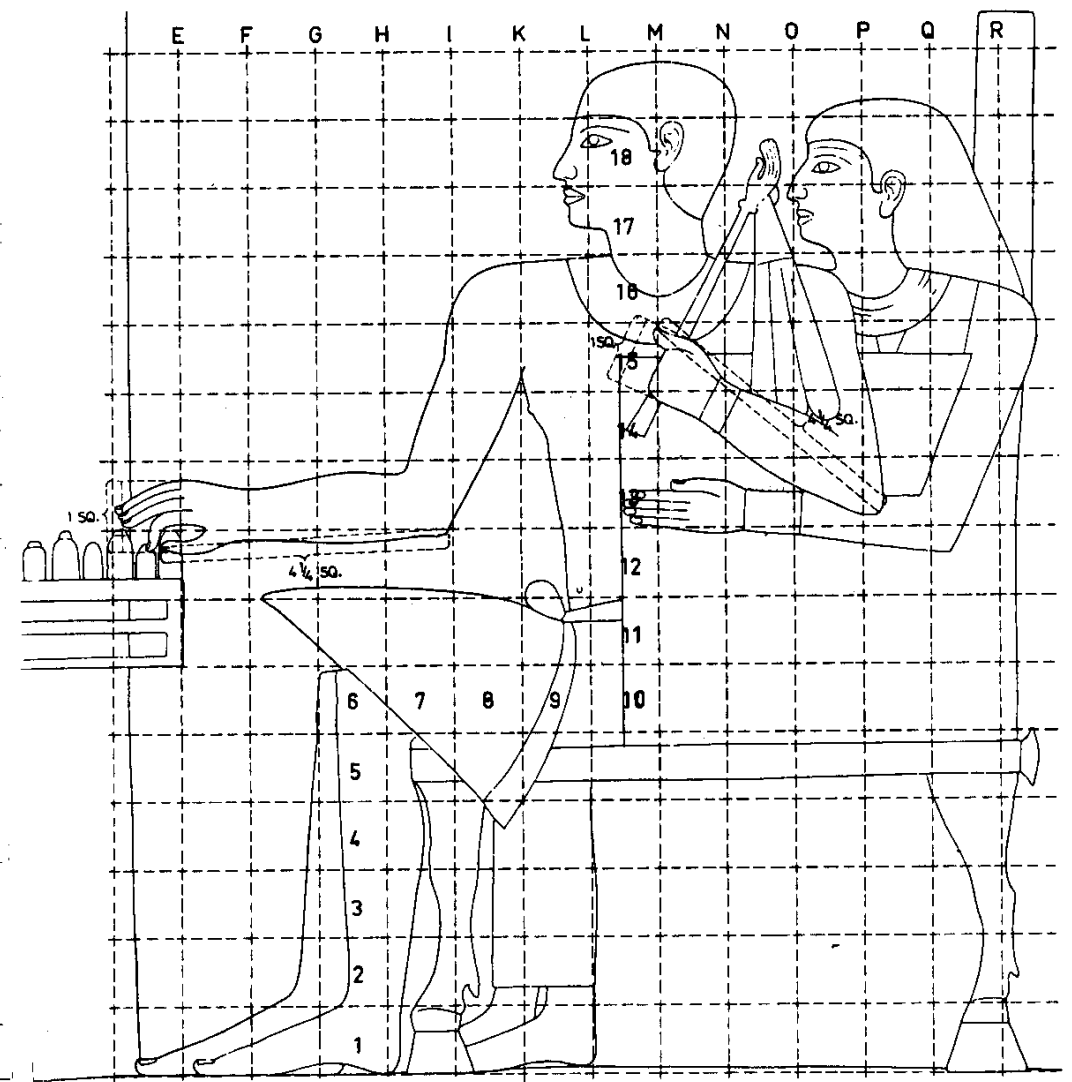


Abb. 18: Der Kanon des Mittleren Reiches, Sitzfigur

Canon of Proportions

- ❑ system used to depict an idealized version of reality
- ❑ applicable to only the figures within an artwork and not the artwork as a whole (this is following the principle of importance) → key features:
 - figure divided into 18 equal units starting at the soles of the feet to the hairline
 - 1 unit: from the sole of the foot to the ankle
 - navel rests at the 11th unit
 - 19th unit = area above hairline (mostly obscured by headdress)
 - The face and the legs are depicted in profile (side view) while the torso is depicted from the front view.

BM EA 579: Userwer



PLATE 1.1

Detail of unfinished scene in TT 92, eighteenth dynasty,
Mond photo 2122, reproduced by permission of the
Griffith Institute.

PLATE 1.2

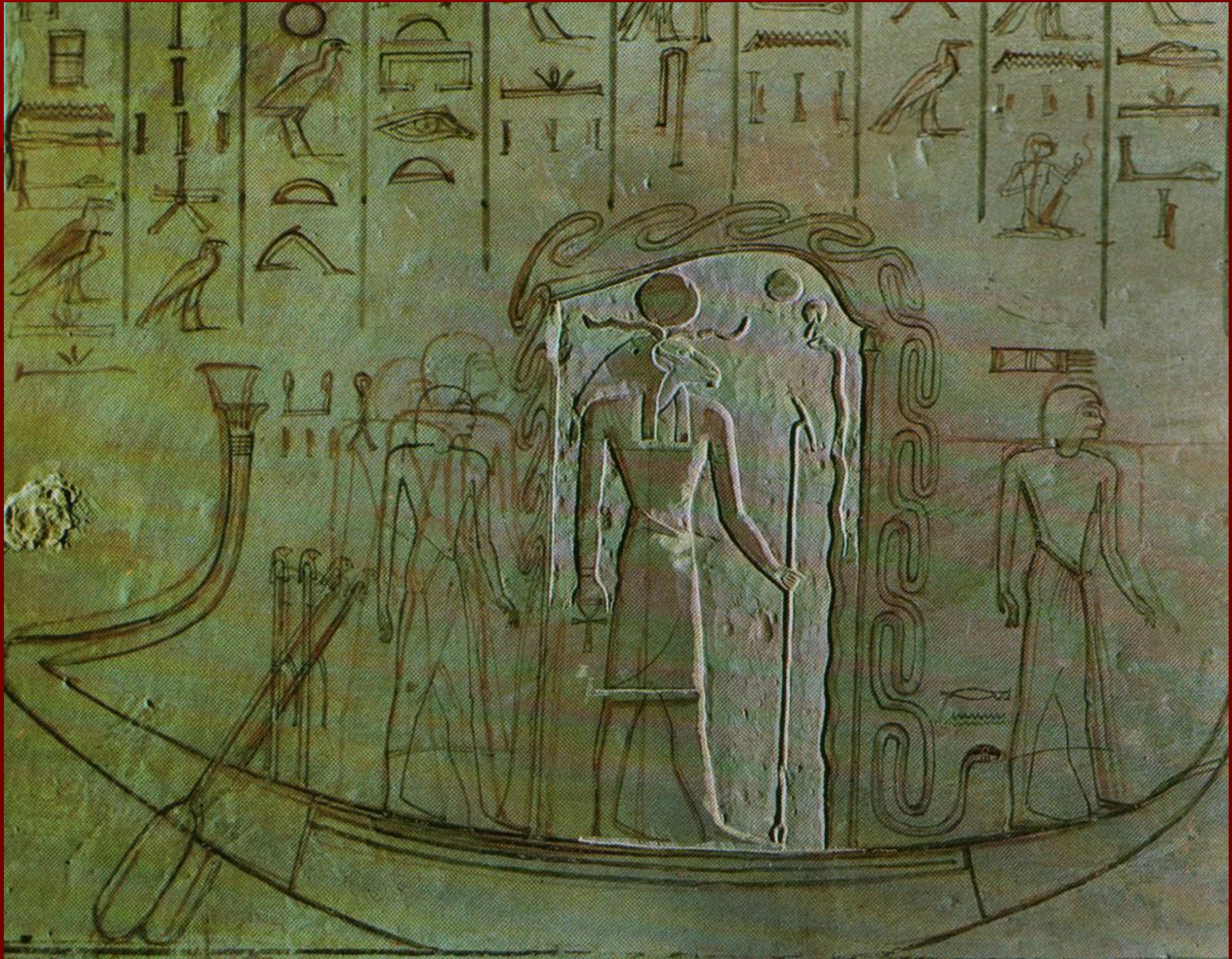
Detail of stela of Userwer, twelfth dynasty, British Museum
EA 579, reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the
British Museum.

Artist's gridded sketch

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Hatshepsut, ca. 1479–1458 B.C.,
from western Thebes



Royal Tomb of Horemhab (KV 57)





Material Culture

- ❑ Excavation on settlement sites: large amounts of objects of diverse kinds, usually broken and discarded rather than lost or deliberately buried
- ❑ require skilled examination and recording
- ❑ offer an incomplete picture of the material, but reflect aspects of the lives and activities of people
- ❑ study of material culture needs to consider user's experience of things, how manufactured and how reached user → history of technology and study of distribution networks

Fitzwilliam E.1.2006

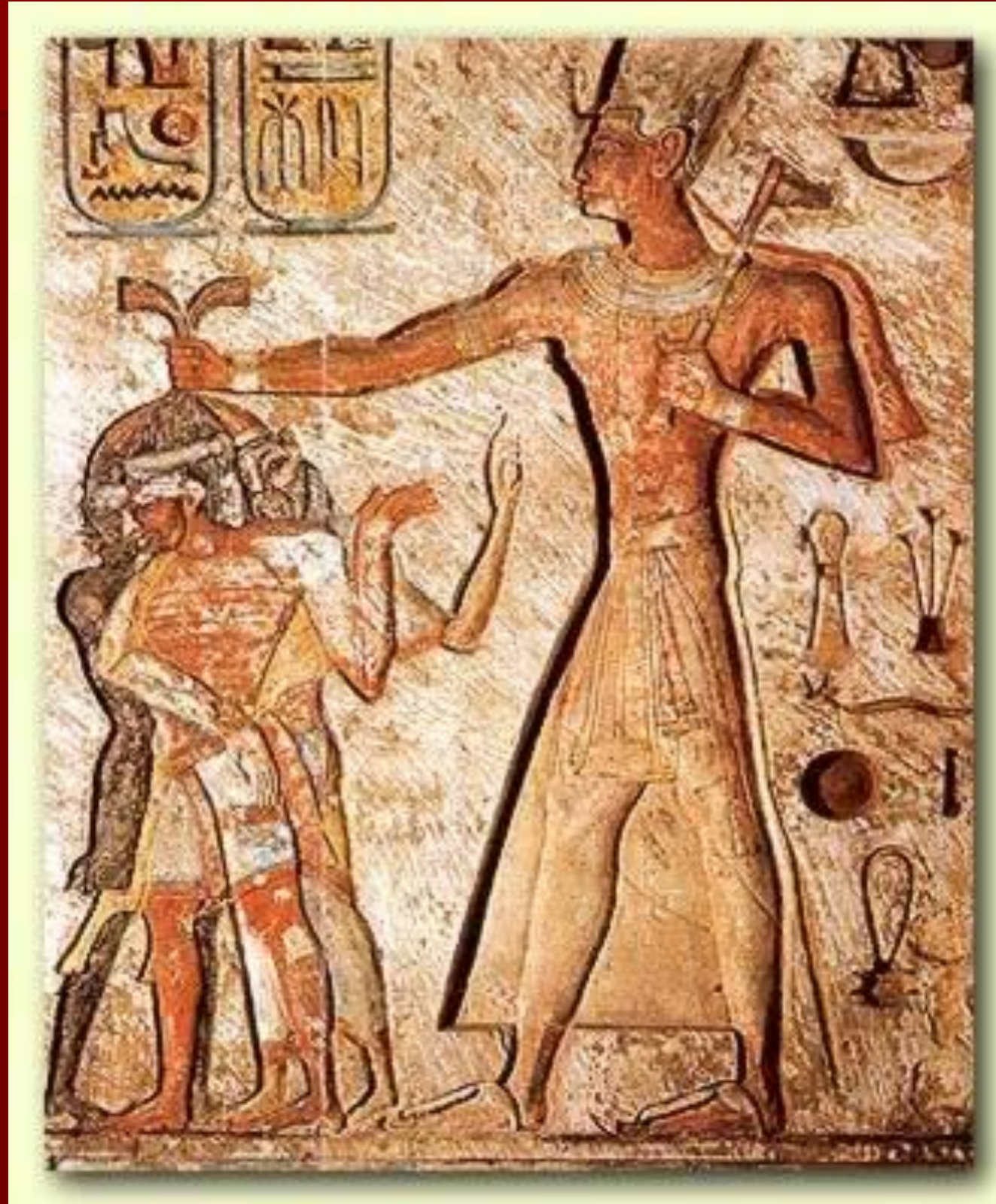


- Dimension: length 0.015 m, width 0.011 m, height 0.006 m
- Base: scarab-beetle with exaggerated wings: above beetle two winged uraei in protecting gesture, guarding two Maat-feathers; single line encircles the inscription
- Beetle, uraei and two feathers can be interpreted as equivalent for the sun disc – cryptographic writing for the god Amun(-Re)

Narmer Palette (31st century BC)



Ramses II smites enemies







Human representations and gender

- **Gender is made clear**
- Men depicted larger than women (greater importance?)
- Men: brown, or dark skin
- women had pale white or yellowish (reflecting being indoors and spending less time out in the sun?)
- Standing statues: men striding, women feet together (passiv? or powerful?) → suggesting difference between being physically active versus passive

Human representations and gender

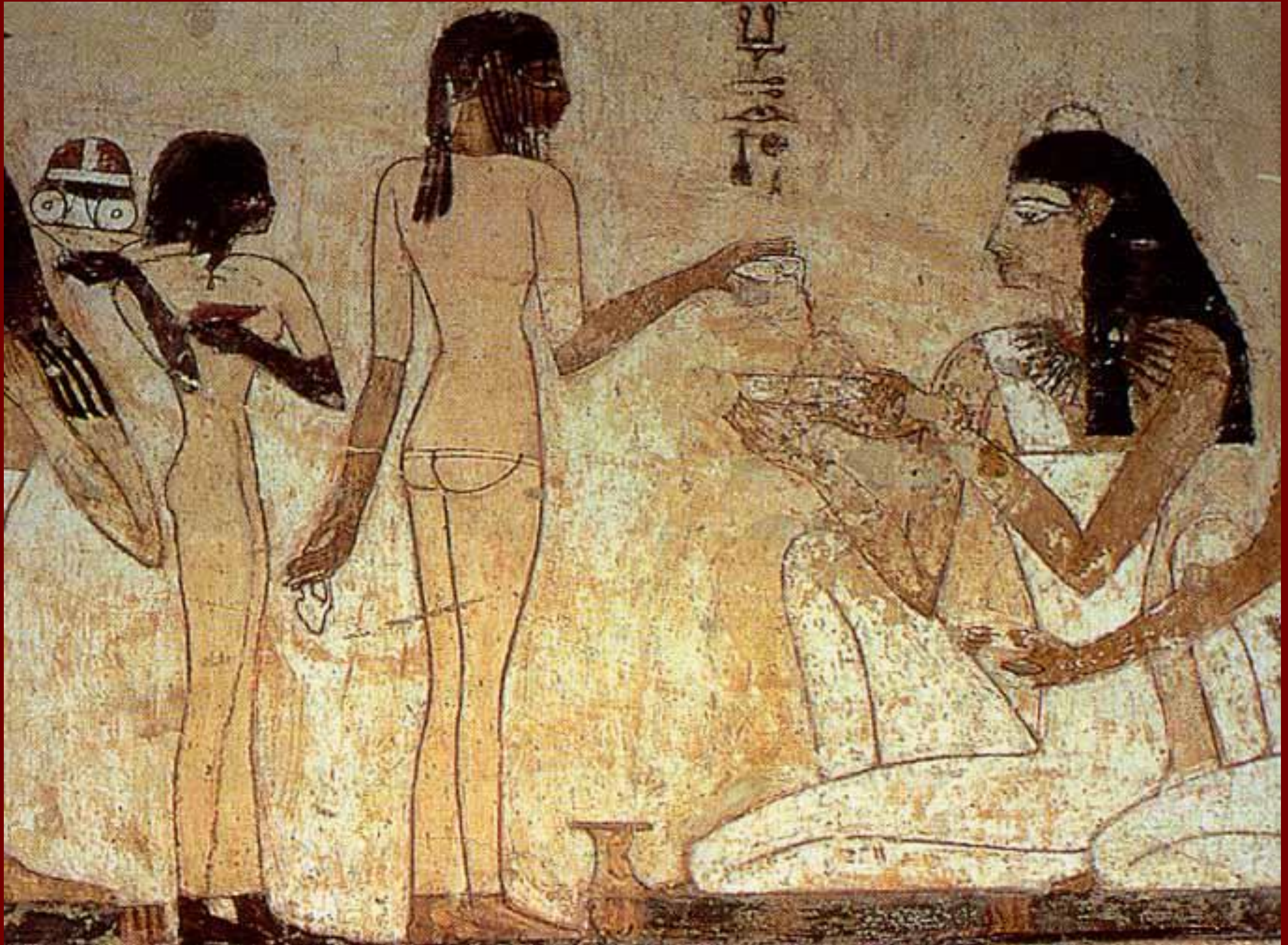
- Groups: person who touches or holds another person = less important than the person being touched → almost always, a woman is shown touching her husband/son
- tomb statuary + relief decoration: men = shown young (in prime physical shape), or old and corpulent (signifying wealth/power; women shown young + beautiful (irrespective age)
- Women NOT excluded but take second place



FEMININITY & MASCULINITY

- ❑ Note difference between SEXUALITY versus and FEMININITY & MASCULINITY
- ❑ Definitions of femininity and masculinity are entirely subjective observations of their authors

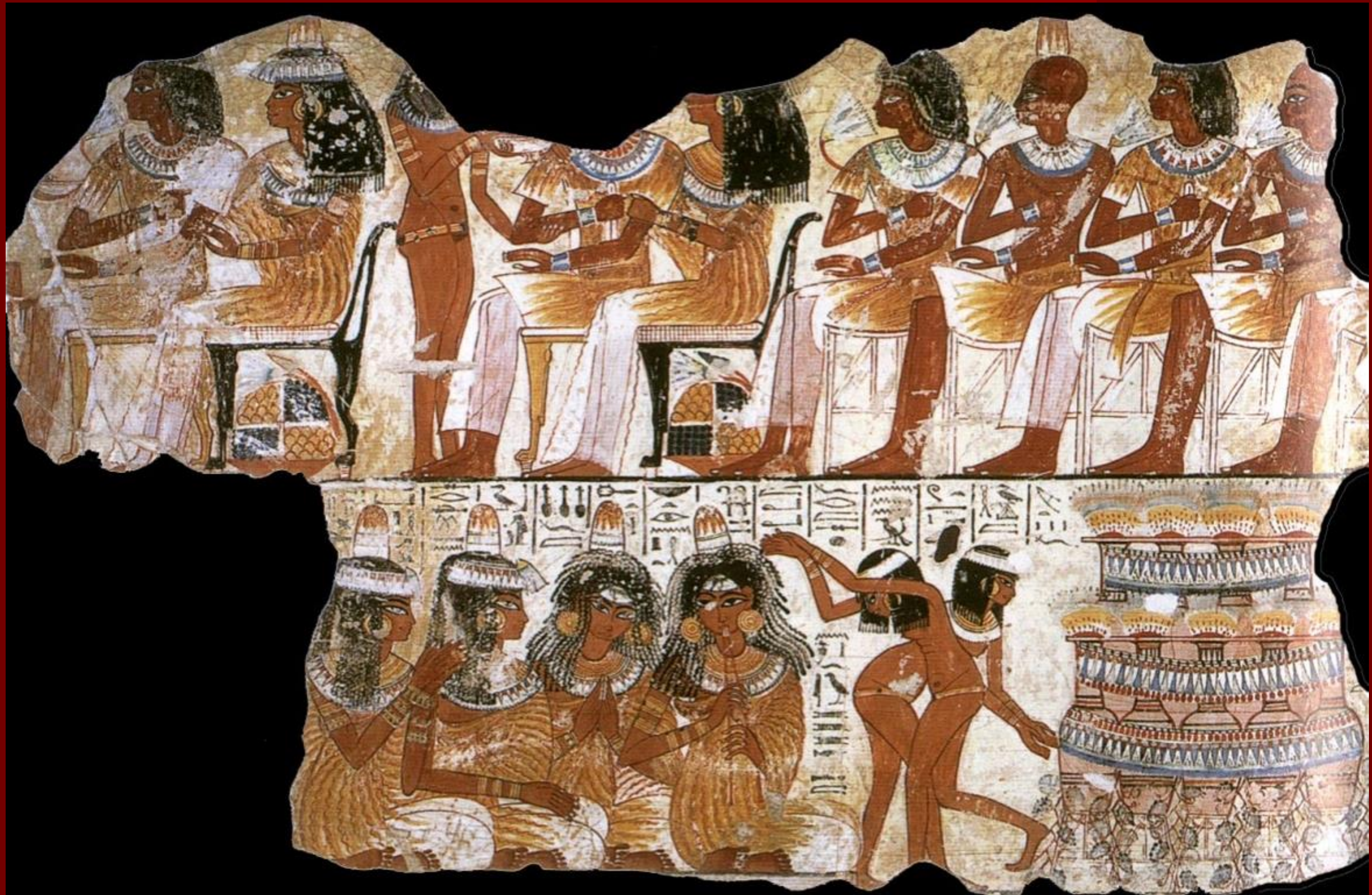
What do you see?



FEMININITY

- ❑ behaviour, actions, quality, appearance associated with being a woman
- ❑ Traits that are considered feminine can be categorized into
 - Physical (such as breasts, wider hips in relation to body size, softer facial features without facial hair, etc.)
 - Psychological (manifested in such things as a concern for relationships (sympathy, sensitivity, high language skills, receptivity)
 - Aesthetics (decoration and ornamentation of home and person)

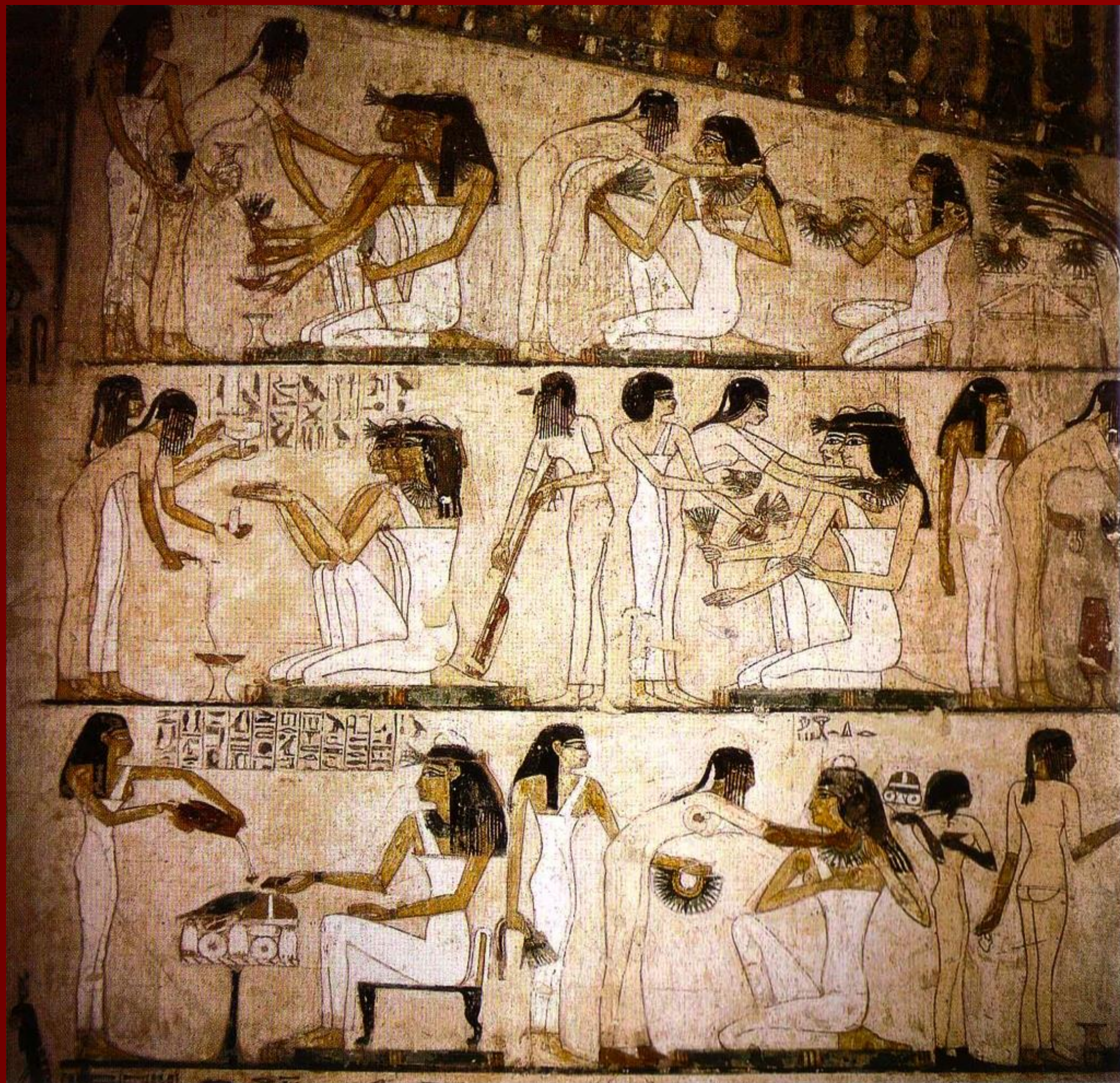
Tomb Chapel of Nebamun – BM EA37981





FEMININITY

- ❑ Distinctly feminine attributes are hard to pin down, as are the masculine, because each attribute (dress, makeup, jewellery, holding implements, position in scene) can be manifested in either sex
- ❑ attempt to categorize traits into strict categories of masculine and feminine = subject of philosophy, sociology, psychology and science for centuries
- ❑ unlikely to be resolved satisfactorily → diverse views, clues, and subsequent conclusions about the matter



Decorum – depictions of women

- ❑ Temple: women may sing and dance for cult of gods/goddesses, but not recorded making offerings (except highest ritual positions) → men do not appear in offerings until 13th dyn. either
- ❑ Family chapel: women generally secondary to a man (husband or son) → except chapels of king's daughters at Gizeh

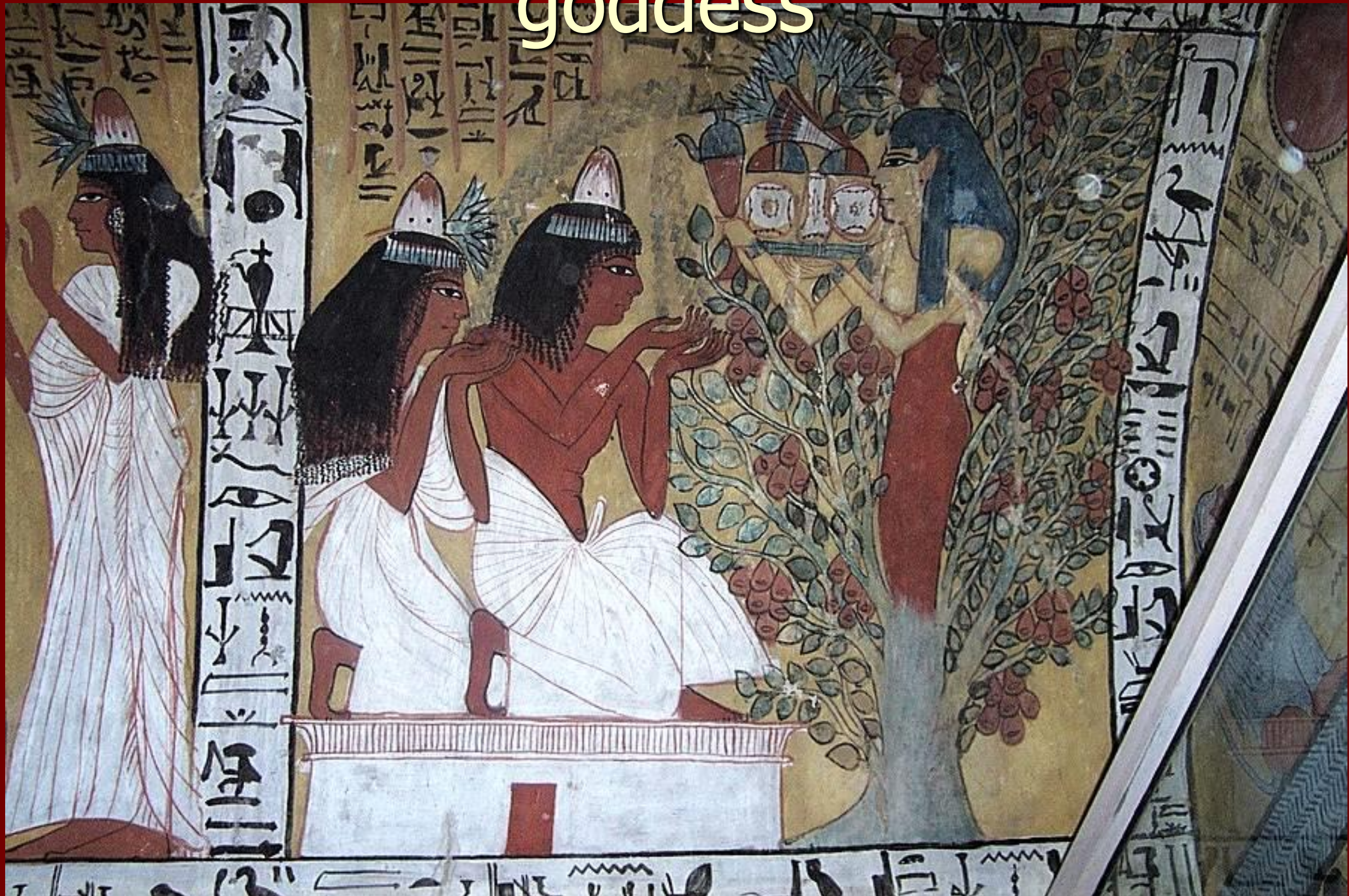
Decorum – depictions of women

- three historical periods in which women enjoy a higher profile in the surviving record in art and architecture:
- OK – women held administrative positions (also in sphere of estates of mothers/wives of kings as manager for a group of women → female physician Peseshet, served in the estate of a king's mother.
- early 18th Dynasty women appear more prominent on chapel monuments (offering and dedicating monuments)
- late 20th 21st + early 22nd dyn. women in formal record in more active roles: hold titles otherwise attested for men (Neskhons, governor of Kush), funerary monuments become free of male kin
 - reflect the political power of ethnic groups from the Western Desert ('Libyan' domination of Egypt) in this time

Characteristics of images of women in general

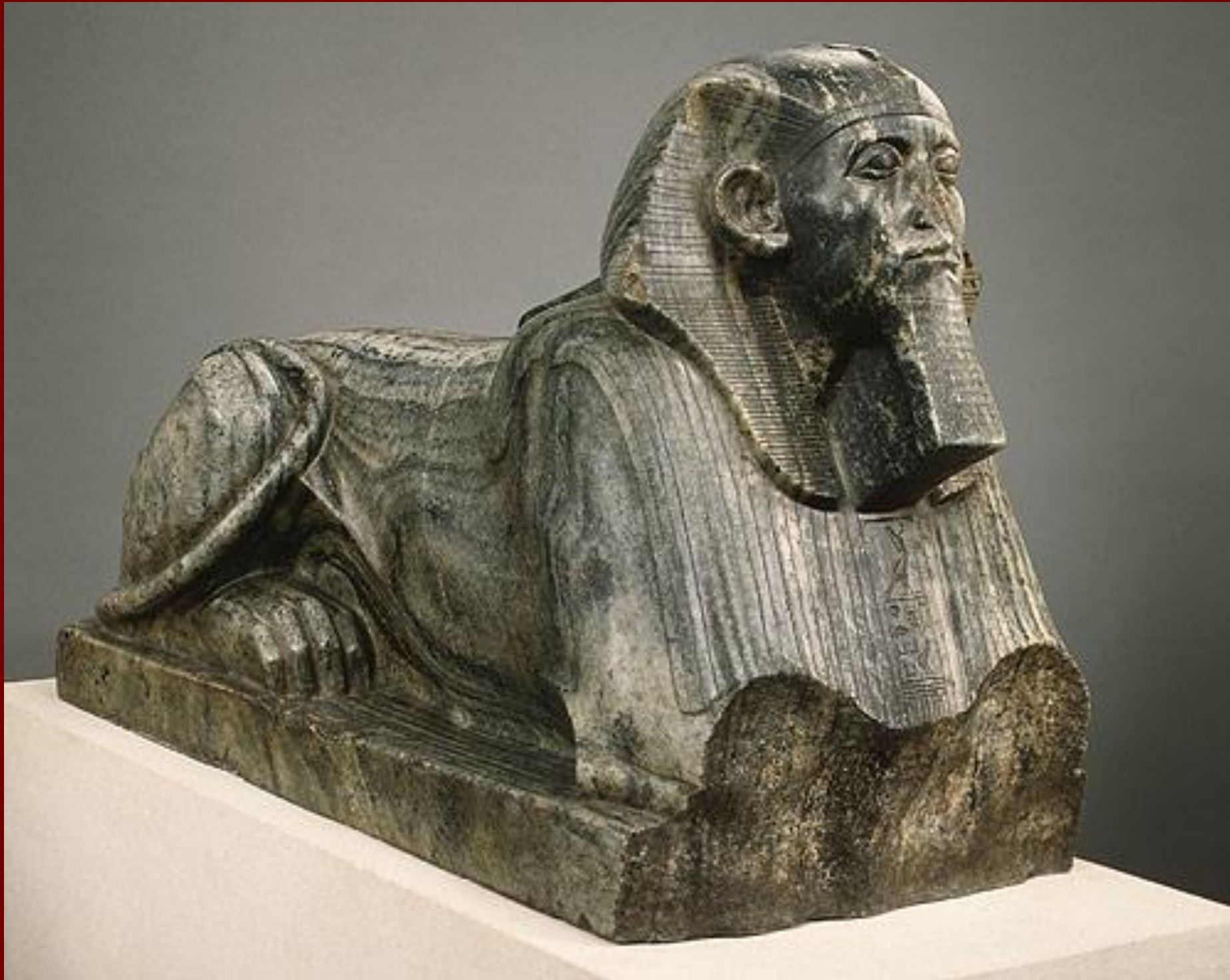
- ❑ not shown with rolls of fat (which indicate bureaucracy)
- ❑ generally lighter in colour (if upper class) and shape
- ❑ physical strength not emphasised
- ❑ costume clingy emphasising “erogenous” zones (though also to be seen as non-erogenous, but highlighting fertility – in regard to individual and ancestral line)

TT1 Sennedjem – couple before tree goddess



Masculinity:

Sphinx of Senwosret III (MMA 17.9.2)



MASCULINITY

- Concepts of masculinity in the western world (first half of the twentieth century) = often rigid and inextricably associated with images of industrialization, military power and conventional social gender roles
- Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1974, 35-36) describes seven areas of traditional masculinity in Western culture:
 1. Physical--virile, athletic, strong, brave (unconcerned about appearance and aging)
 2. Functional--breadwinner, provider
 3. Sexual--sexually aggressive, experienced. Single status acceptable

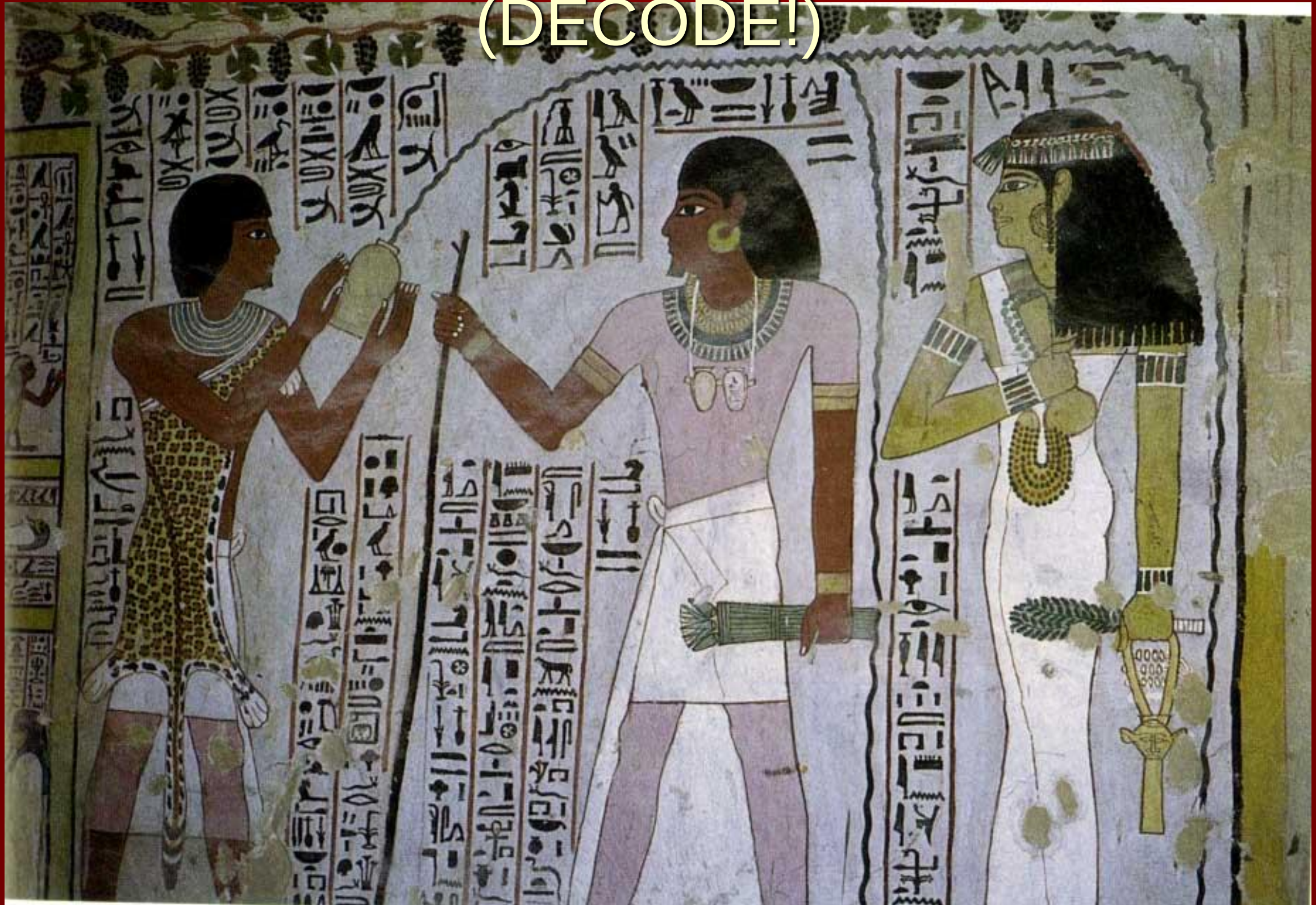


MASCULINITY

4. Emotional--unemotional, stoic;
5. Intellectual--logical, intellectual, rational, objective, practical,
6. Interpersonal--leader, dominating; disciplinarian; independent, individualistic (applies to western societies);
7. Other Personal Characteristics--success-oriented, ambitious; proud, egotistical (applies to some societies): moral, trustworthy; decisive, competitive, uninhibited, adventurous.

TT96 Sennefer ("Tomb of the Vines")

Notice as many iconographic details as possible
(DECODE!)





Other Artistic Rules

□ Gender:

- Women – lighter skin tone with both feet together
- Men – darker skin tone with left foot stepped forward

□ Roles and Gestures: Each figure = specific role

- role determined by what they were wearing, what they were doing, their position and posture, the other figures around them, and specific gestures
 - cross-legged seated figure is a scribe
 - person with an open hand in front of their face is in mourning.



Other Artistic Rules

- ❑ **Scale:** The larger in scale a figure is, the more important. The proportions of children do not change; they are just shown smaller in scale. Children are depicted as having a finger in their mouth.
- ❑ **Colour:** Ancient Egyptians believed colours had meanings

Colour

- **Red** = Life and victory but also anger and fire
- **Yellow/Gold** = Gold is everlasting and indestructible, a protective colour
- **Blue** = The sky, water (Nile River) and primeval flood (creation); rebirth and fertility
- **Black** = Colour of the underworld and night; death but also rebirth (afterlife) like the fertile black soil that rejuvenated the land after the Nile overflowed annually
- **White** = Associated with omnipotence. The Upper Egypt crown was white
- **Green** = New growth, good health, life and rejuvenation

