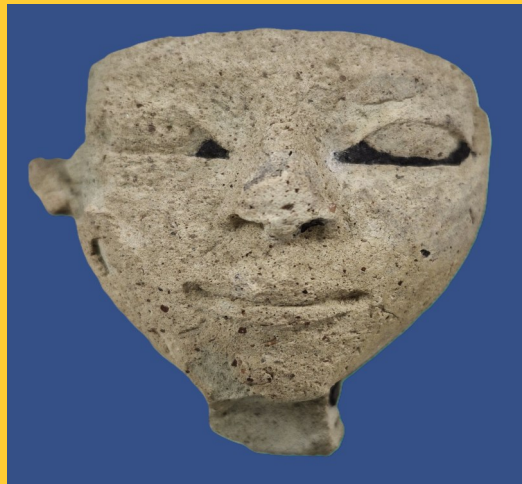




Ancient Egyptian miniature clay head.

CCM 175.996.



(Photographs by Jenkins, 2025).



Miniature clay head. This small and incomplete clay human head was donated to the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum from the estate of the late Major Harry Hartley Southey. It is from Egypt, but there is no further provenance in relation to its origin. It has significant damage to several areas, including on both sides of the face where the ears might have been. Also, below the chin where a small beard may have been and at the rear where it is believed to have slotted into a much larger feature such as a cartonnage mask.

It was at one time painted as there are the remains of black paint within the eye sockets, in the nostrils and along the profile of the face and chin. Its overall colour is a grey/beige, but there also appears to be a subtle hint of green.

To the rear is a groove which appears to have been made by placing a finger into the clay during preparation and may have been created to support or secure the head when slotted into a mask.



(Photograph of groove, Jenkins, 2025).

A visual examination of the clay fabric has concluded that it is of Egyptian marl clay (Arnold & Bourriau, 1993, pp.168-186, plate V).

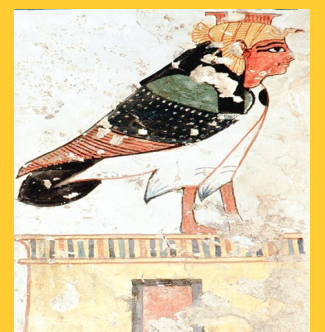
Marl clay. Marl clays are found in wadi deposits or in limestone and shales near the river Nile (Nicholson & Shaw, 2009, pp.121-131). Due to their high mineral salt content, marl clays typically fire to a cream or white colour, but may appear a pale greenish-grey colour if fired at a high enough temperature (Arnold & Bourriau, 1993, p.177; Nicholson & Shaw, 2009, pp.121-131).

Rishi style. These heads have been associated with the 'Rishi' style cartonnage coffin masks of the New Kingdom (Dodson, 1998, p. 93-99). Rishi coffin masks have certain key characteristics, such as a prominent feather pattern over the top and sides of the mask which portray the deceased as a bird with a human head, its wings wrapped protectively along the body, and the placement of the wing feathers along the side of the face would suggest that the whole mask was intended to depict a human-headed bird, or *ba* (Ikram & Dodson, 1998, p. 169).



(Rishi mummy mask. National Museums Liverpool, 2025)

The *ba*. The concept of the *ba*, frequently portrayed as a bird with a human head, in ancient Egyptian funerary practices was highly significant, with the *ba* being viewed as a moving spirit that embodied the deceased's personality or soul (Taylor, 2001, pp. 20-23; Tyldesley, 2011, p.114).



(Depiction of Ba, Egypt Museum, 2025)

Photographs.

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