

A9: Week 3, Thu

Ptolemaic Period / Roman Period

HPAH5086/6086 - Art and Ancient Egypt 4000BC to the
2020ies: Exhibiting artistic representations

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Your object of the day



- Theatrical Masks and Ram Vessel for Offering
- Period: Roman Period
- Date: A.D. 2nd century
- Probably from Fayum, Medinet el-Fayum (Krokodilopolis-Arsinoe)
- Medium: faience
- Dimensions: 19 x 19 cm (7 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.)
- 26.7.1019—.1021-group
- Provenance Carnarvon Collection until 1926

Your object of the day



- masks too small and brittle to have served as actual theater masks
- refer to the god Dionysus, patron of the theater and god of rebirth → equated with Osiris
- (terracotta) theater masks found in burials and sanctuaries in Greece, in sanctuaries and as garden decorations in Italy
- Egypt: known only from burials → offerings to Osiris/Dionysus
- terracotta masks from Antinoopolis in Middle Egypt → tombs?

Your object of the day

- ram feeds from a lotus-form trough
- Rams identified with Amun or Khnum
- terracotta statuettes and on coins Harpokrates = riding a ram or sitting upon a lotus flower
- faience composition → Harpokrates popular god of fecundity and rebirth during the Roman era

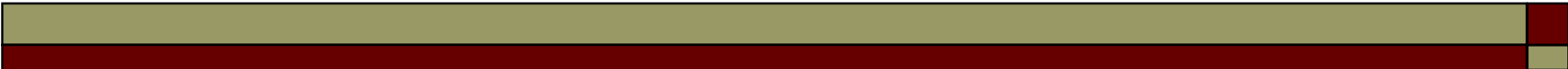


Additional Reading

- ❑ Grimm, G. (1975). *Kunst der Ptolemäer- und Römerzeit im Ägyptischen Museum Kairo*. Mainz: Zabern.
- ❑ Coppens, F. (2007). *The wabet : tradition and innovation in temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman period*. Prague : Czech Institute of Egyptology Faculty of Arts, Charles University of Prague.
- ❑ Ashton, S.-A. (2001). *Ptolemaic royal sculpture from Egypt : the interaction between Greek and Egyptian traditions*. Oxford : Archaeopress.
- ❑ Manning , J.G. (2010). *The last pharaohs : Egypt under the Ptolemies, 305-30 BC*. Princeton : Princeton University Press.
- ❑ Walker, S. (ed.) (2001). *Cleopatra of Egypt : from history to myth*. Princeton : Princeton University Press.
- ❑ Ashton, S.-A. (2002). *A question of authenticity and date: Roman copies and Ptolemaic originals* . Online.
<http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/2a%20A%20question%20of%20authenticity.pdf> [Accessed 13/11/10].
- ❑ Stanwick, P.E. (2003). *Portraits of the Ptolemies. Greek kings as Egyptian pharaohs*. Austin, University of Texas Press.

Ptolemaic Period

- ❑ Egypt was ruled by a series of kings all named Ptolemy, started with conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great
- ❑ on his death (323 BC) empire divided among his generals: Eg. fell to Ptolemy, declared himself king
- ❑ Greek = state language, capital moved to newly founded Alexandria
- ❑ fusion of Eg. culture and Hellenistic influences supported new administrative system



Ptolemaic Period

- ❑ Ptolemies stressed their desire to support 'Egyptian' identity and manners
- ❑ many temples built or extended during this period
- ❑ Osiris, Isis and Horus = symbolic ideal family with particular popular Isis cult (spread outside Eg.)
- ❑ new Hellenistic influence: clothing + more realistic representation of facial features (coffins with mummy portraits).

Edfu



Empty or unspecific cartouches

Temple of Hathor, Dendara Temple of Hathor, Dendara



High relief
(Kom Ombo,
Sobek temple)



Innovative Hieroglyphs



Innovative
usage of
ancient
motives
and
Horror Vacui



Karnak, Opet temple

Horror Vacui:
fear of empty
spaces



Horror Vacui in European art:

The Fall of Babylon,
engraving by Jean
Duvet from the
Apocalypse series,
circa 1555



Temple relief



Soter I (BM EA 1641)



Head of Ptolemy II Philadelphos (MMA 12.187.31)



- superb workmanship, skills of royal workshops had survived

Cleopatra VII

- Statue Hermitage (right)
- Limestone head of a woman resembling Cleopatra VII (Castellani Collection GR 1879.7-12.15)





Lady with a Large Wig

Ptolemaic Period
(4th century BC)

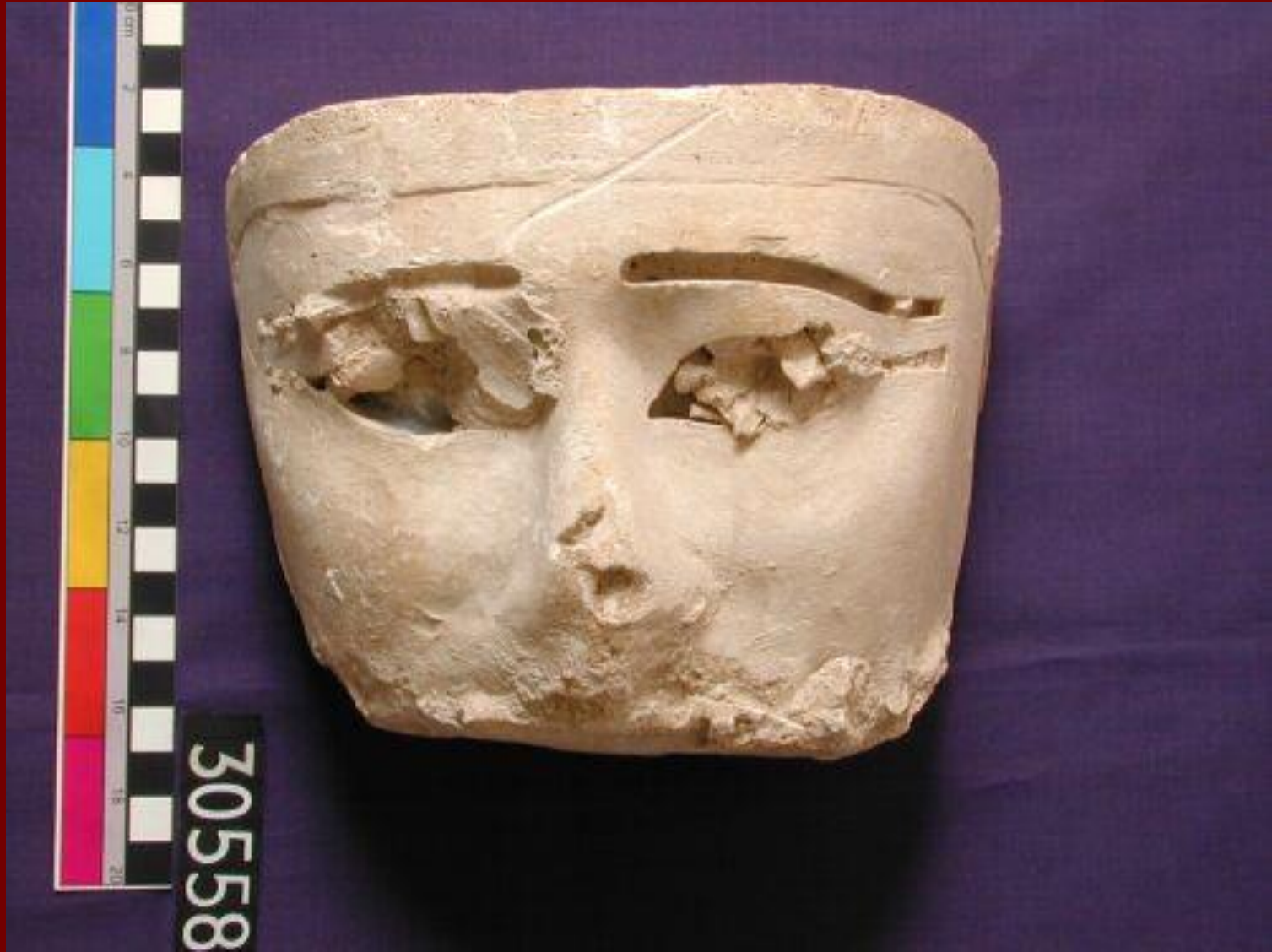
Virginia Museum of
Fine Arts 55.8.13

Sculpture Models

- ❑ Royal portraits in plaster = common in Ptolemaic Period
- ❑ associated with sculpture workshops or dedicated in honour of rulers in temple
- ❑ primary function still under discussion, but maybe both



UCL 30558 (Petrie Museum)



'sculptors' models'

- about 2000 'sculptors' models' known from Ptolemaic Period, (many earlier?)
- two main types
 - models of sculpture (kings' heads, female busts, Hathor, Bes figures, torsos, lions, lion heads, bulls etc.)
 - and models in relief (animals, kings' heads etc.). They are most often made in limestone; the back is always flat, many still show traces of grids; others seems to be unfinished. Several are painted and some are even gilded. Some of them have a hole (for hanging them on a wall).

Model in relief (with grid)



'sculptors' models'

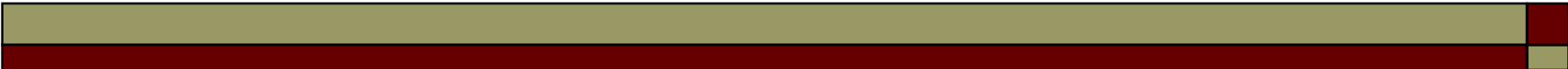
- ❑ Function disputed:
- ❑ two principal rival interpretations:
 - (1) real models used as prototypes in sculpture workshops: problematic, because on reliefs many scenes known from temple reliefs are missing
 - (2) they are votive offerings: more likely from few archaeological contexts for such material.
- ❑ Both are coming together, because: sculpting was sacred activity → therefore maybe proper to offer spin-offs or manufactured imitations for deposition as votive offerings

Roman Period

- ❑ 31BC: Eg. = province of Roman Empire (Mark Antony + Cleopatra VII defeated at Battle of Actium)
- ❑ No ruling family living in Egypt; members of Rome's élite classes = forbidden to enter Eg. without permission of emperor
- ❑ Romans left religion and culture of Egypt intact: temples completed (followed style of predecessors, represented in Egyptian manner)
- ❑ Important: Temple of Isis at Philae (cult of Isis incorporated into Roman religion as 'mystery cult')

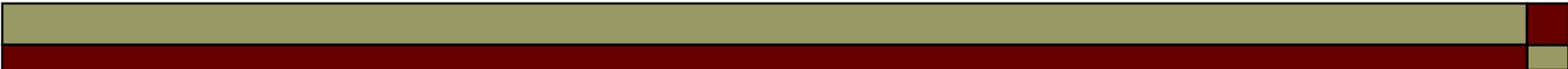
Philae





Roman Period

- ❑ Romans installed own administrative system (well documented in papyri)
- ❑ greatest changes: in everyday life
 - included the introduction of agricultural implements and practices → Eg. important for grain supply for Rome
 - iron-working
- ❑ Egyptian culture gradually became subsumed by that of the Roman empire.



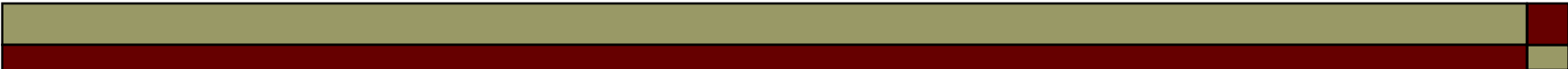
Art

- Many Roman copies of Ptolemaic sculptures
 - → Ashton: A question of authenticity and date:
Roman copies and Ptolemaic originals

Art



- Many Roman copies of
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authenticity and date: Roman
copies and Ptolemaic
originals
 - MMA 10.176.44



Egyptian mummy portraits

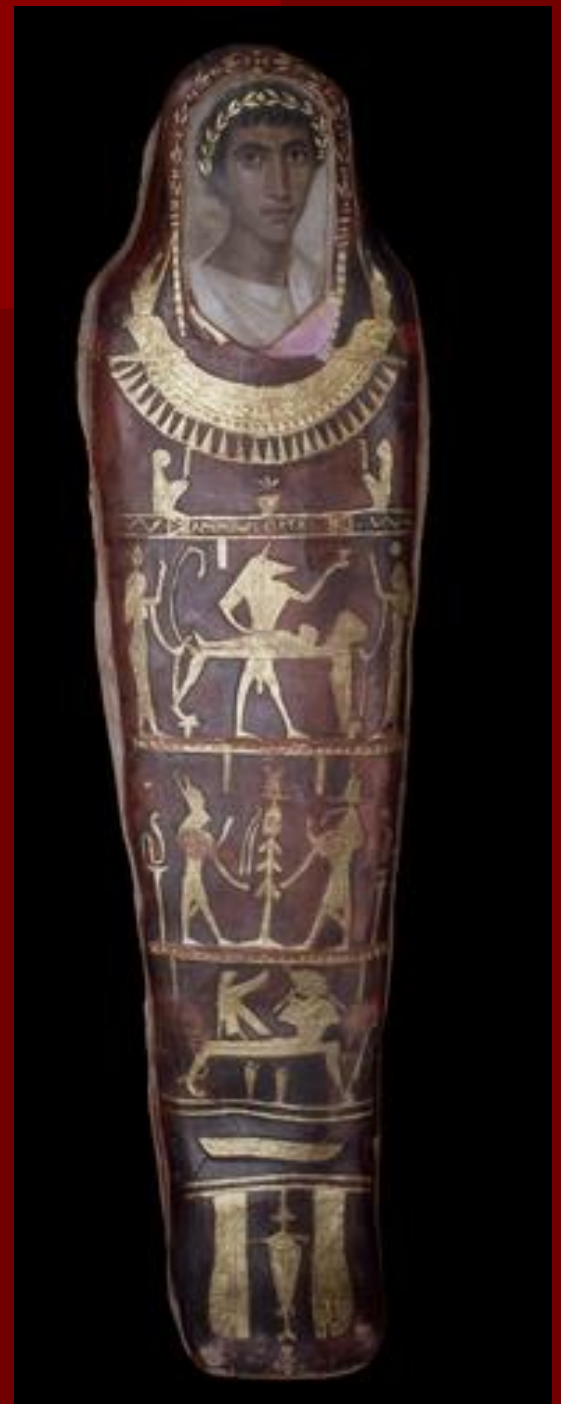
- portrait to show how individual would have looked like = important in Roman art: portraits placed in tombs as memorial of family members
- Mummy portrait appeared in first century AD, popular for 200 years
- placed on the outside of the cartonnage coffin (over head of individual or wrapped into mummy bandages)
- painted on wooden board (lifelike scale)

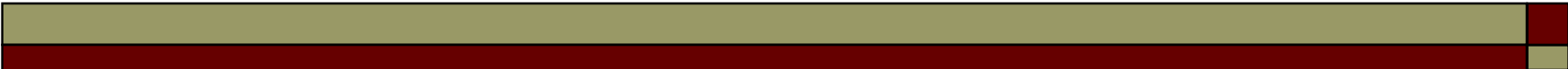
Mummy case and portrait of Artemidorus

Hawara

Roman Period (AD 100-120)

A mixture of cultural
influences





Egyptian mummy portraits

- ❑ Some dateable on basis of hairstyles, jewellery, clothes worn
- ❑ Possible identification of family members (physical similarities)
- ❑ Accuracy often been questioned: checked in comparison mummy board and mummy with techniques used in delicate facial surgery (portraits indeed show person) with some element of artistic licence (make people slimmer. ...)



Painted plaster cartonnage mask of a woman

- ❑ covered upper body
- ❑ particularly popular in Middle Egypt
- ❑ face sometimes made separately in a mould and subsequently attached to the head-dress and torso
- ❑ Eg. Symbolic ornaments (collar, winged scarab beetle, protective wings of Isis and Nephthys)
- ❑ Roman influence: garland of rosebuds in hair, holds sprig of leaves (myrtle)

Mummified bull

Thebes

Roman Period (after 30 BC)

Elaborately bandaged
mummy of a calf

- ❑ Bulls sacred to several gods:
Apis bull (Memphis) = Ptah;
Buchis bull (Armant) = Montu;
Mnevis bull (Heliopolis) = Re
- ❑ bulls gave oracles
- ❑ identified by special markings,
one actual animal at a time
- ❑ at death mummified and
buried



Cat statuette, MMA 56.16.1

