

Isis, Horus and Osiris - a Divine Family in Wales?

Object biographies of un-provenanced
Egyptian artefacts

OR

How to create a narrative of objects in the Egyptian
collection of Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Merthyr Tydfil

Dr. Katharina Zinn

AHAN7030

Exhibiting the Past: Museums, Collections and Heritage

THE OBJECT

**CC 1697.004, 1699.004,
1705.004**

Osiris: h. 6.5cm, w. 2.4cm, th. 0.4cm;

Isis: h: 6.3cm, w. 1.45cm, th. 0.8cm;

Horus: h. 4.7cm, w. 1,3cm, th. 0.5cm

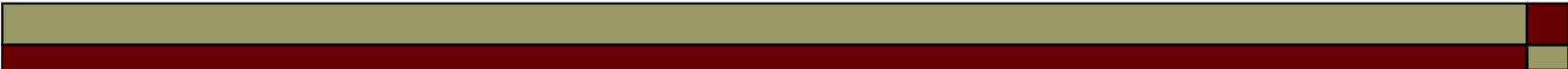


Osiris

Horus

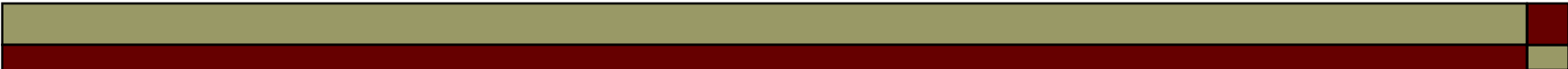


Isis



Why object biography?

- ❑ No provenance, nothing known about CC1697.004, 1699.004, 1705.004
- ❑ Igor Kopytoff (1986) → cultural biography of things: “What makes a biography cultural is not what it deals with, but how and from what perspective. [...] In the homogenized world of commodities, an eventful biography of a thing becomes the story of the various singularizations of it, of classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change in context.”

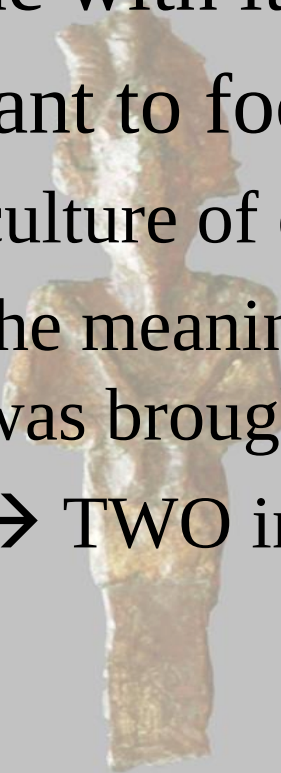


Why object biography?

- According to Gosden/Marshall (1999): biography “seeks to understand the way objects become invested with meaning through the social interactions they are caught up in”
- Therefore “inextricably linked to the creation of social worlds” (Steel 2013)
- BUT: Life-cycle not only interesting or linked to social worlds at the beginning → whole life cycle, also at **stage of reception** → heritage studies process: what are WE doing with these objects

Why object biography?

- ❑ not only social life of things in ancient Egypt, but is done with it in museum?
- ❑ I want to focus on :
 - culture of origin (in this case Egypt) AND
 - the meaning today as the culture, in which the objects was brought into
 - → TWO intersecting lives

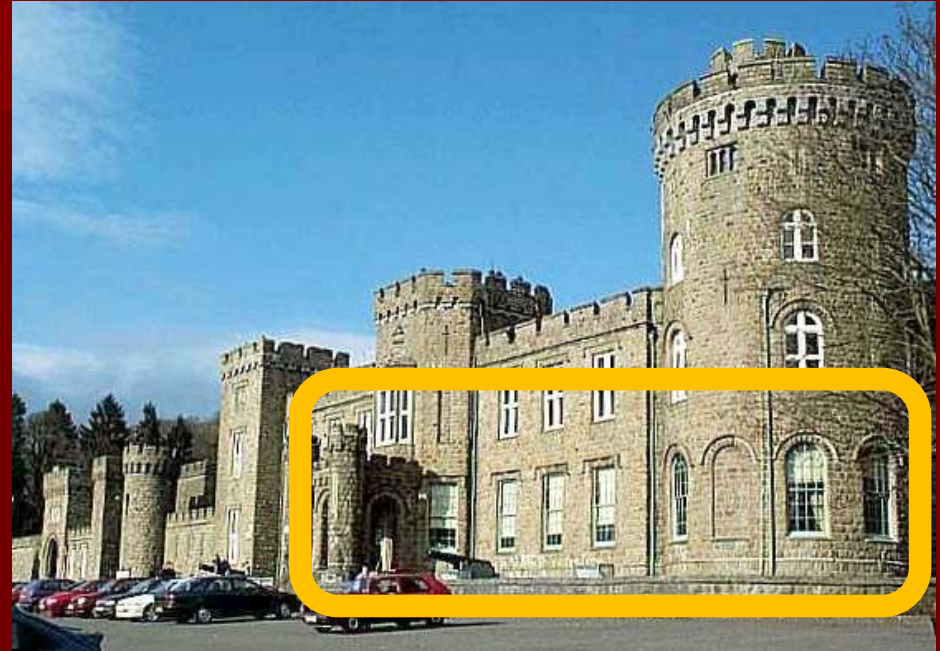


Cyfarthfa Castle Museums and Art Gallery Merthyr Tydfil



The Welsh heritage perspective

- designed by Richard Lugar for the Merthyr iron master Richard Crawshay
- built between 1824 and 1825
- family seat up until the early 1900's
- 1910 purchased by Merthyr Borough Council and turned into a school and museum
- grammar school with separate girl and boys areas until being Secondary modern school until 2013
- Museum situated on the ground floor



Cyfarthfa Castle Museums and Art Gallery Merthyr Tydfil



Secondary archaeology



The theoretical approaches

Artefacts of Excavation

The International Distribution of Finds from British Excavations in Egypt, 1880-1980



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

'Artefacts of Excavation' is a 3-year, AHRC-funded collaborative project led by Dr Alice Stevenson at UCL, and Professor John Baines at the University of Oxford.

From the 1880s to the 1980s British excavations at sites across Egypt resulted in the discovery of tens of thousands of objects. A large proportion were exported from Egypt and distributed to an estimated 200 museums around the world before they were fully documented or published. 'Artefacts of Excavation' is an ambitious project that will create an online resource for the relocation and re-contextualization of these objects, and will explore the role of these distributions in the development of archaeology and museology



→ Here at least facts about excavations known!

The theoretical approaches

Stephanie Moser: Representing Archaeological Knowledge in Museums. In: Public Archaeology 3(2003), 3-20

- In recent years researchers in museum studies have begun to look at how exhibitions have participated in a complex process of meaning-making [...]. Historians of science and culture have also explored how exhibitions have a significant role not just in reflecting ideas about the natural and cultural world, but also in **creating** them.

Susan Langdon: Beyond the Grave: Biographies from Early Greece. In: American Journal of Archaeology, 105(2001)4, 579-606

- Object biography is an analytical technique that traces the changing social meanings an object accumulates during its lifetime. [...] While carrying the same liabilities as human biography – [...] – in application, object biographies effectively intersect with and elucidate **larger social narratives**, such as colonial encounters or gender constructions.

What to do
with this
divine
family?



How to create
the larger (social
and cultural)
narrative?

The Egyptological approach - contextualise

Triads:

Divine families!

=grouping gods by 3:
triad consists of a god,
his spouse and one
child

most popular: Osiris,
Isis and their son Horus

Theban triad: Amun-Re,
wife Mut, son Khonsu

Memphite triad: Ptah,
Sekhmet and Nefertem

Louvre E 6204 (H.: 9 cm, L.:
6,60 cm; gold, obsidian)

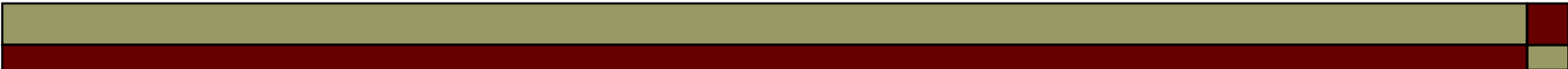


The Egyptological approach



MMA 23.6.11 (H. : 6.75 cm;
copper alloy)





The Museum Studies perspective

- ❑ Objects in museum collections have the potential of connecting people and events over time and space. (A. Herle, 2012)
- ❑ **Promoting objects**
- ❑ **creating (new understandings of) objects**
- ❑ **BEYOND** social life of things as looked at in Egyptology, to create an extended life-cycle as an object biography of reception and heritage

The mummy head in Merthyr



Visitor
expectations

Noble's Knick-Knack



The BBC has launched its landmark project, 'A History of Wales', which will tell the history of Wales in a way that is personal to you that tells the story



Scott Reid writes:

The object I've chosen from Cyfarthfa Museum is an ancient Egyptian mummy head. It was collected by Major Harry Hartley-Southey while in Egypt at the start of the 20th Century. He was approached by an Arab gentleman who said he had a burial chamber under his house. The Major went to the chamber climbing down the rope which was specially laid out for him and he found in the chamber two mummy-heads. One with what he described with a look of death on its face and the other with a look of peace. He went for the one with the look of peace which is the one we have here. We think it's female, we've never had it dated however, we've taken it to Manchester University and they found out it's naturally blonde which means it's either a fake or a European who emigrated to ancient Egypt.

What do we know about what we know? The museum 'register' as museum object (Geoffrey N. Swinney, 2012)

COUNTY BOROUGH OF
PUBLIC MUSEUM AND
REGISTER OF

Index.

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Oil Paintings
Oriental exhibits
Water colour drawings
Greek & Roman exhibits
Drawings. Wash, pencil, sepia, wash, crayon,
Egyptian & Assyrian
Miscellaneous exhibits, including "Old Welsh"
Photographs
Medals, Coins, Notes.
Industrial Arts, Sculpture, Furniture, Woodcarving, Embroidery, Pottery
War Relics
Natural History
Geology.
Palaeolithic & Neolithic.
Bones
Society Collection

COUNTY BOROUGH OF
Public Museum
REGISTER

Egyptian & Assyrian

No. of Exhibit	Description	How Acquired
34-39	Mummy Band	Egyptian Presented M ^{rs} D. Cotton
40	Fragment of inner cartonnage (large piece)	" "
41	Mummy wrapping, embroidered. 23 Dyn?	" "
42	Osiris - bronze figure - on loan	" "
43	Earthenware bottle. (tear or perfume) 25 th dynasty	" "
44	Scarf	Egypt
45	Charm. Nubian head	" "
46	Fragment of inner cartonnage (small piece)	" "
47	Shank vase (2)	" J. H. James Esq. The College Vase
48	Plaster Earthenware vessel (2) F. S. Sherkin Esq. Pashdyna	" "
49	Carved Heads	" "

MERTHYR TYDFIL
and Art Gallery.
OF EXHIBITS.

143

Date	Cost if any £ s d	Condition	Insurance Value £ s d	Remarks
Aug. 1928		unfit for exhibition as badly deteriorated. Burned by order of Committee. June 1947.	- - -	h. S. Taylor
			1 - -	
			- - -	
		Bonus (2)	1 10 -	
			1 - -	
			- - -	
			- - -	
Feb 1929			6 - -	
			5 - -	

unfit for exhibition as badly deteriorated. Burned
by order of Committee. June 1947. h. S. Taylor.

Collecting Egypt News about the collecting & display of ancient Egypt. Twitter at CollectingEgypt

Magazine | [Home](#)MAY
13

Major Harry Hartley Southey (1871 - 1917)

A small but interesting collection of Egyptian antiques can be found at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum in Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan. This 1825 property houses a number of collections from different periods and representing several different subjects. The Egyptian display was acquired by Major Harry Hartley Southey, a member of a local newspaper family. His army career took him to Egypt where he was able to acquire a number of objects which were donated by his family after his death. The collection includes small statues, amulets, canopic chests and jars, sections of coffins, head rests and a mummy mask.

[Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery Site](#)

Other links:

- [Personalities](#)
- [Cyfarthfa Castle](#)

Posted 13th May 2009 by [David Gill](#)Labels: [army](#) [Wales](#)

1

2 View comments

The Memory Studies
perception – the collector
and the antiquities dealer

SOUTHEY COLLECTION.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS CASE WERE COLLECTED BY THE LATE

MAJOR HARRY HARTLEY SOUTHEY,

1/5TH BATT. WELCH REGT

A PORTION OF THE ARTICLES WAS BEQUEATHED BY HIM TO THE CORPORATION.

THE REMAINDER, INCLUDING THE WHOLE OF THE EGYPTIAN OBJECTS,

AND THIS CASE, WERE PRESENTED BY

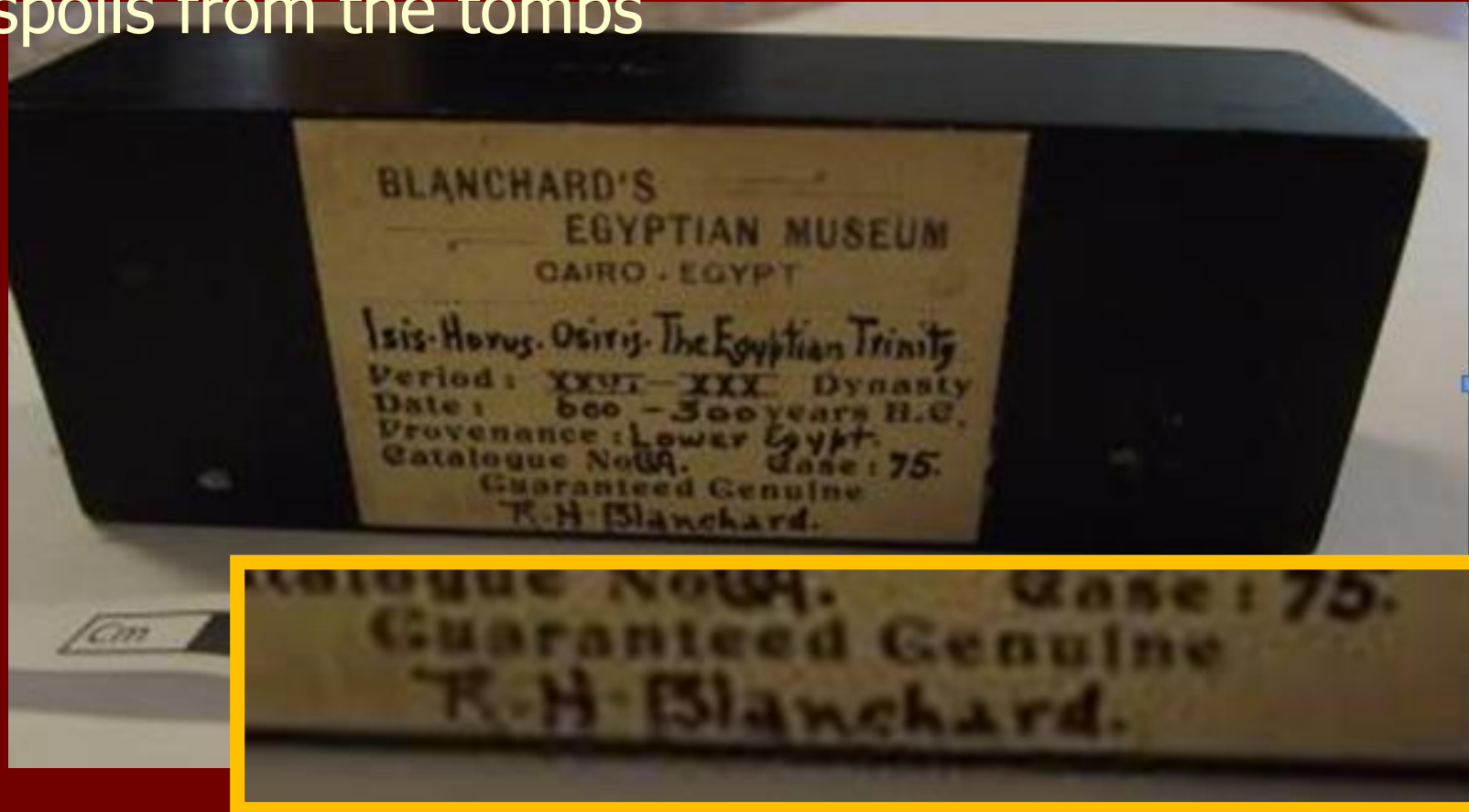
H. W. SOUTHEY, ESQ., J. P., AND FAMILY.

*Geology.
Palaeolithic & Neolithic.
Caves.
Southey Collection.*

Major Harry Hartley Southey (1871-1917)

- ❑ from a wealthy family who owned the Merthyr Express newspaper
- ❑ military career → travelled widely throughout Mediterranean and the Middle East → Started to collect Roman, Grecian, Egyptian and Asian Objects
- ❑ particularly interested in Egypt, and on a visit in 1901 was able to buy a quantity of Egyptian antiquities which he later added to when stationed in Egypt during 1916 → Cairo: became friendly with a curator of an Egyptian museum who helped him to collect ‘spoils from the tombs’ → packed objects away safely in wooden crates ready to be shipped back to Wales
- ❑ killed in action during the Battle of Gaza in WW I (1917)
- ❑ Family donated his collection to Cyfarthfa Castle Museum (founded 1911) after his death

Cairo: became friendly with a curator of an Egyptian museum who helped him to collect 'spoils from the tombs'



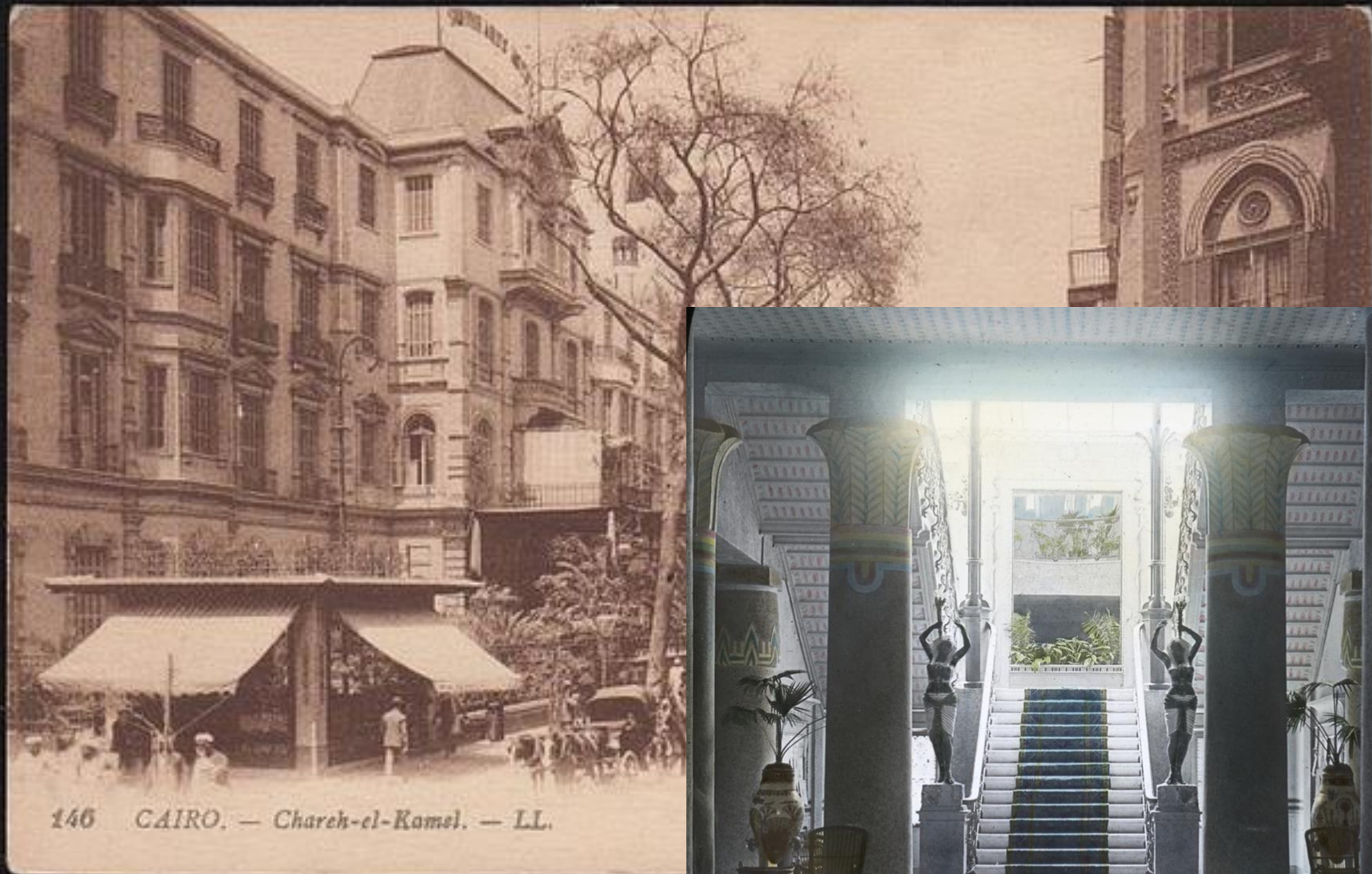
The theoretical approach:

What's Authenticity got to do with it?

R. H. Blanchard, Schâri Kâmil, Cairo

- American antiquities dealer with store in the famous Shepherd Hotel





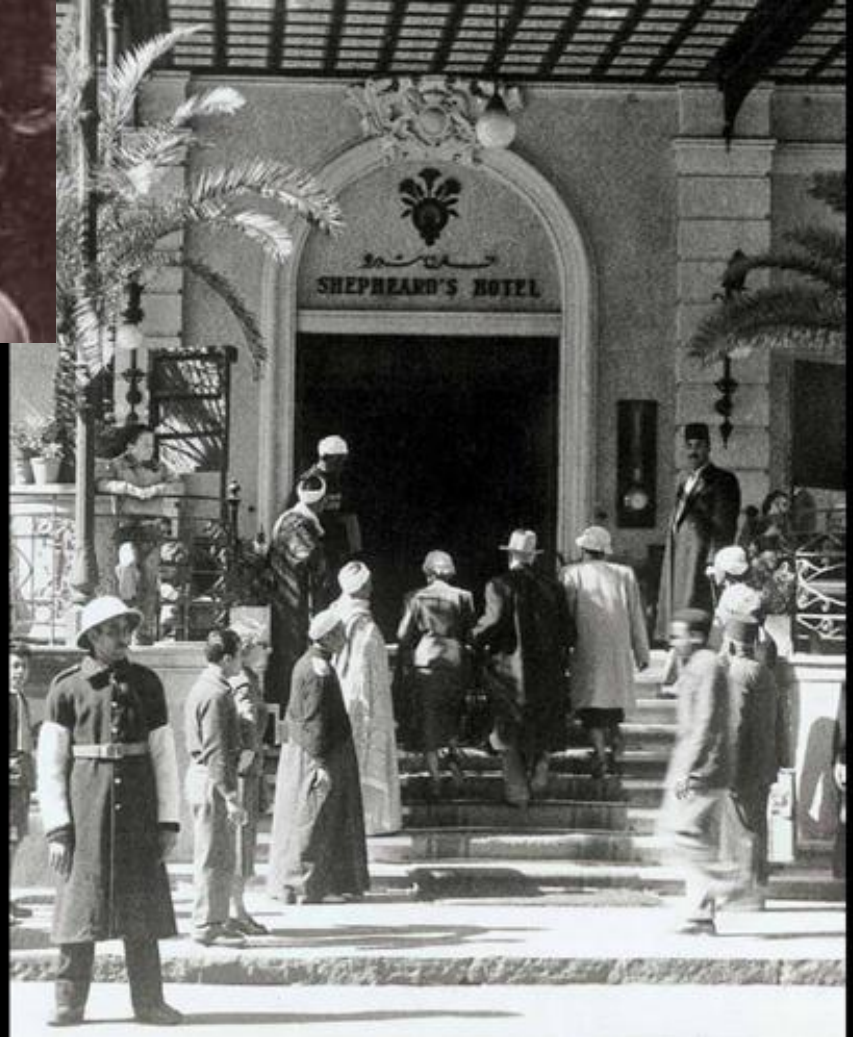
Orientalism

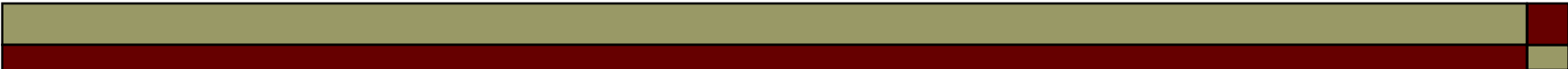


Elizabeth Peters: Amelia Peabody Mysteries



Heritage and Reception





R. H. Blanchard, Schâri Kâmil, Cairo

- ❑ American antiquities dealer with store in the famous Shepherd Hotel
- ❑ Wrote a book in 1909 “Handbook of Egyptian Gods Mummy Amulets”
- ❑ Seen as reliable antiquities dealer
- ❑ Customers were:
 - Oslo Papyrus Collection (L. Amundsen acquired various collections during his stay in Egypt 1927-1929)
 - Pitt Rivers Museum (might be donation or buy)
 - Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History

Yale Peabody Museum ANT 264365

- Scarab, grey. XIX Dynasty 1200BC. Still attached to collector's board. "Blanchard's Egyptian Museum Cairo, Egypt". "Ram headed sphinx guarded by the winged Ureaus Serpent." 1.6cm x 1.8cm w/out board; w/board 5cm x 7.5cm. Egypt



Guides us back to museum studies and heritage → relations between the museum, object and various kinds of communities

[Home](#) [Introduction](#) [Named Collectors](#) [Timelines](#) [Explore Collector Relationships](#) [Statistics](#) [Papers](#)



SEARCH :

Pitt Rivers Museum

The website of the 'The Relational Museum' project

This website aims to give information about the history of the Pitt Rivers Museum (1845-1945), its collections and staff. The site also gives access to the detailed catalogue of artefacts included and information about the individuals who contribute to the project.

The contents of these pages were written by the full-time members of the project.

Introductions to the:

 [Project and methodology.](#)

 [Statistics prepared by the research team.](#)

 [Individuals in the PRM.](#)

 [General history of the Museum.](#)

 The [monograph](#) to be published at the end of the project.

 [Progress](#) compiled research

Useful links:

 [Pitt Rivers Museum catalogue databases.](#)

 see the [Pitt Rivers Museum](#) today

For further information about the project or its findings please email prm@prmu.ox.ac.uk

 The financial support of this project by the ESRC is gratefully acknowledged.

Relational Museum Collector Information

Collector: R.H. Blanchard

Collected or donated by: 1926

PRM Relationship: Field Collector Other Owner PRM Source

Continents: Africa

Career: ?Dealer

Oxford University Educated? Unknown

Oxfordshire Based? No

Clubs:

Biography: Possibly

Institution: ☐☐☐

Collection Size: Small

Durham: Oriental Museum
EG5214 (4.9 x 6.7 x 1.8 cm)



Louvre E 6204 (H.: 9 cm; L.: 6.6 cm)



The Egyptological approach



© Stephen Thomas

The original triad?



© Stephen Thomas

OR?



© Stephen Thomas

Museum of Art
and Archaeology,
Missouri 77.184



Lot 25A of LiveAuctions,
started 8:00 AM - Jun
13, 2014 – Artemis
Gallery: Egyptian
Bronze Osiris w/ Cat,
Isis on Reverse

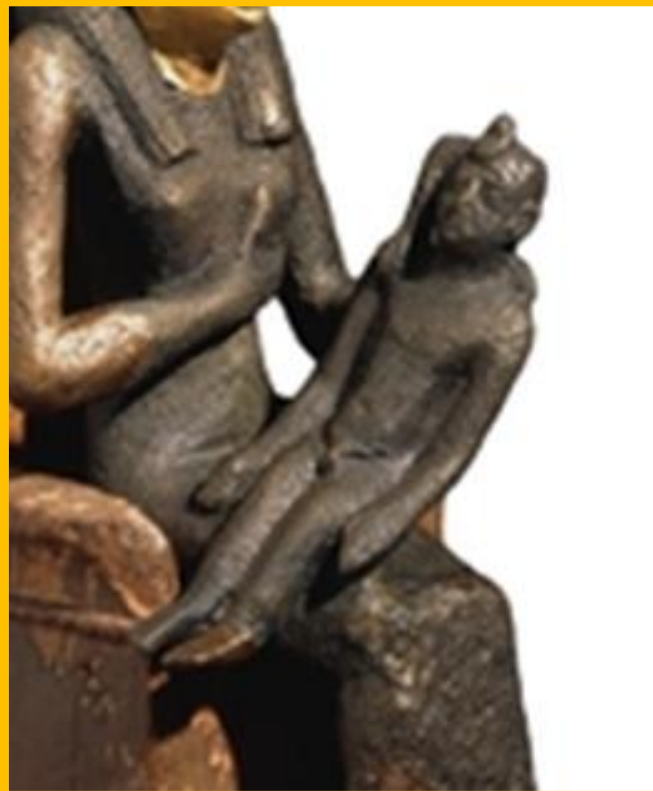


Museo
Archeologico
Nazionale,
Museo Egizio,
Florence 315,
H. 17.0cm



EA 67186

H.: 22.8cm L.:
14.800 cm (plinth)



CREATE YOUR NARRATIVE – guided by your **particular** object

- **Heritage Studies** – Welsh heritage
- **(Secondary) Archaeology** – excavation in the museum's storage rooms
- Anthropological and archaeological **theory**
- **Egyptology** – searching for comparative objects
- **Museum Studies** – presenting of objects
- **Memory Studies** – the collector and antiquities dealer
- **Material Culture Studies**

Conclusion

- Egyptological value of figurines is not very high in the sense of spectacular
 - votive offerings are common
 - particular figurines not of high quality
 - artefacts are not well preserved → County Council has not the money for restoration
- Only creation of a narrative could change that and increase the
 - Increases attractiveness of object for visitors
 - Increased visitor numbers
 - Museum could receive more money

