

# Ancient Egypt Art and Magic

Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art  
December 17, 2011 - April 29, 2012



The purpose of the Museum of Fine Arts is to increase and diffuse knowledge and appreciation of art, to collect and preserve objects of artistic interest and merit,

to protect works of art, to provide facilities for research and to offer instruction and opportunities for aesthetic enjoyment of art.

Opened to the public in 1965, the Museum is dedicated to serving all people by pursuing excellence in art from antiquity to the present through collection, exhibitions and education for its diverse audiences.

The Museum has an encyclopedic collection of art from around the globe and across the centuries. The approximately 18,000 objects include works by Monet, Gauguin, Renoir, Morisot, Cézanne, Rodin, O'Keeffe and many others. Also on view are ancient Greek and Roman, Asian, African, pre-Columbian and Native American art. The Museum's photography collection of more than 12,000 images is one of the largest and most significant in the Southeast. Two interior gardens, one devoted to sculpture, encourage reflection.

Education programs at the Museum are made possible, in part, by the Margaret Acheson Stuart Society. For more information about the Museum, visit [fine-arts.org](http://fine-arts.org).



FONDATION  
GANDUR  
POUR L'ART

Jean Claude Gandur is one of the world's most generous philanthropists and art collectors. He spent his childhood in Alexandria, Egypt, where he learned Arabic, became aware of other cultures and acquired his great passion for Egyptian antiquities. In 2010, he established the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art and formed a partnership with the Musée d'Art et de Histoire, Geneva, which has the largest public collection of antiquities in Switzerland.

The Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, based in Geneva, Switzerland, is a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering cultural education and understanding through the enhancement of public access to its world-renowned art collections.



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## About the Exhibition

*Ancient Egypt Art and Magic* from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva, on view from December 17, 2011 through April 29, 2012, is a landmark exhibition. The 101 magnificent objects in this exhibition, organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, have never been seen in America and have rarely been shown abroad.

Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi, the curator, is one of the world's foremost egyptologists. Dr. Bianchi received his Ph.D. from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. He has worked and consulted for museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Brooklyn Museum, the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem and the Ancient Egyptian Art Museum in Tokyo. Dr. Bianchi has written more than 50 books and has appeared in more than 60 television programs on three continents.

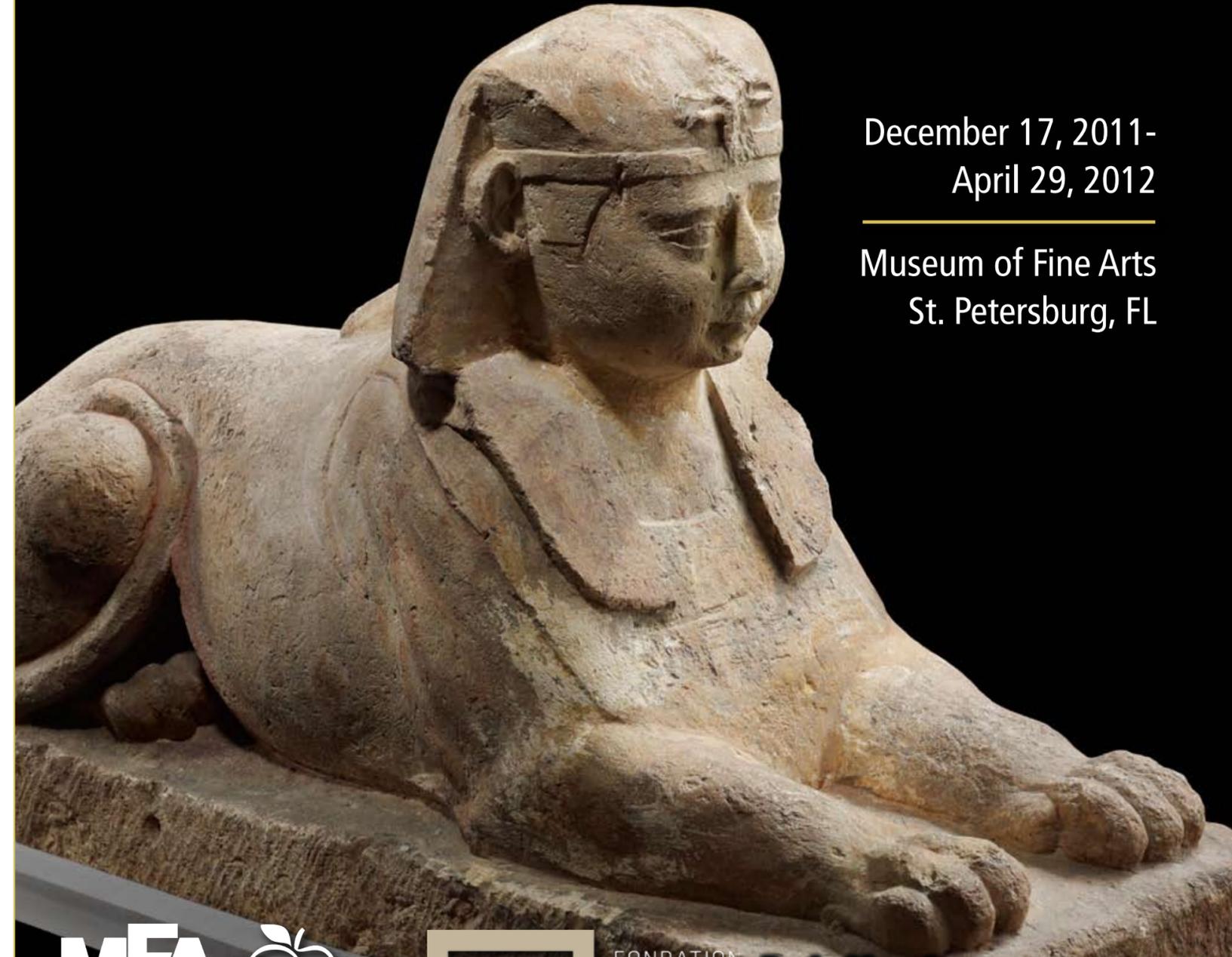
*Ancient Egypt Art and Magic* from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva is sponsored by Progress Energy Florida (presenting sponsor), the Stuart Society of the Museum of Fine Arts (premier sponsor) and the *St. Petersburg Times* (media sponsor). The official host hotel is the Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club. Additional support has been provided by Bright House Networks.

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Museum of Fine Arts  
St. Petersburg, FL



A Statuette of a Mother Goddess Nursing her Divine Son  
Dynasty XXVI Ptolemaic Period, 664-30 BC  
Bronze. Height 15 5/16 in. Inv. No. EG-128

## In the know. In the Times.

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Photographs provided by the Museum of Fine Arts, FL.  
Sources: **Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic: Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva** by Robert Steven Bianchi. All photographs of objects in exhibition © Sandra Pointent. Photograph of The Pharaoh Rameses II © Darwin Media, Ltd.

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**Visual Arts:** VA.68.C.1.1-3; VA.68.C.2.2-3; VA.68.C.3.1; VA.68.C.3.2; VA.68.C.3.3; VA.68.C.3.4; VA.68.S.1.2; VA.68.S.1.5; VA.68.O.1.1; VA.68.H.1.1; VA.68.H.1.3; VA.912.C.1.1-3; VA.912.C.2.2-4; VA.912.C.3.1-3; VA.912.C.3.5; VA.912.S.1.2; VA.912.S.1.6; VA.912.H.1.1-4; VA.912.H.1.10; VA.912.H.2.1  
**Language Arts:** LA.6.1.5.1; LA.6.1.6.1-10; LA.6.1.7.1-8; LA.6.2.2.1-4; LA.6.3.1.1-3; LA.6.3.2.1-3; LA.6.3.3.1-4; LA.6.3.4.1-5; LA.6.4.2.1-3; LA.6.5.1.1; LA.6.5.2.1-2; LA.6.6.2.1-4; LA.7.1.5.1; LA.7.1.6.1-10; LA.7.1.7.1-8; LA.7.2.2.1-5; LA.7.3.1.1-3; LA.7.3.2.1-3; LA.7.3.3.1-4; LA.7.3.4.1-5; LA.7.4.1.1; LA.7.4.2.1-3; LA.7.5.1.1; LA.7.5.2.1-3; LA.7.6.2.1-4; LA.7.6.4.1-2; LA.8.1.5.1; LA.8.1.6.1-10; LA.8.1.7.1-8; LA.8.2.2.1-4; LA.8.3.1.1-3; LA.8.3.2.1-3; LA.8.3.3.1-4; LA.8.3.4.1-5; LA.8.4.1.1-2; LA.8.4.2.1-3; LA.8.5.1.1; LA.8.5.2.1-5; LA.8.6.2.1-4; LA.8.6.4.1-2; LA.910.1.5.1; LA.910.1.6.1-11; LA.910.1.7.1-8; LA.910.2.2.1-3; LA.910.3.1.1-3; LA.910.3.2.1-3; LA.910.3.3.1-4; LA.910.3.4.1-5; LA.910.5.1.1; LA.910.5.2.1-5; LA.910.6.2.1-4; LA.910.6.4.1-2; LA.1112.1.6.1-9; LA.1112.1.7.1-8; LA.1112.3.1.1; LA.1112.3.2.1-3; LA.1112.3.3.1-4; LA.1112.3.4.1-5; LA.1112.5.1.1; LA.1112.5.2.1-4; LA.1112.6.2.1-4



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## Color in ancient Egyptian art

The ancient Egyptians had very limited words for colors. Where the modern, Western spectrum has seven colors – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet – the ancient Egyptians had five. Red included the European colors of red, orange and yellow. Green included green, blue, indigo and violet. The ancient Egyptians also recognized black, white and variegated, or multicolored.

Colors had many meanings to the ancient Egyptians. For example, red was the color of the sun, which had a positive meaning. However, red was also the color of blood and of the desert, which had negative associations.

As the color of the fertile silt deposited by the Nile River, black was associated with rebirth and preservation, but it also could signify nothingness. White was associated with ritual purity and cleanliness.

Ancient Egyptians believed that their gods were divine beings with skin of gold and bones of silver. Objects made of, or painted, gold or silver had divine associations. Because of this, the thought of using gold and silver coins for commerce was considered sacrilegious. The ancient Egyptian economy remained primarily a barter economy into the Ptolemaic Period.

Source: **Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic**: Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva by Robert Steven Bianchi

## Ancient Egyptian religion

Ancient Egyptian religion was polytheistic and included complex beliefs about the afterlife. There were hundreds of gods and goddesses. Two of the most important were the sun god, Ra, and Osiris, ruler of the underworld. Egyptian gods could take many forms, including animal forms and mixed forms with an animal head on a human body. Although they were much more powerful than human beings, ancient Egyptian gods were not all-powerful nor all-knowing. The Egyptian pharaoh occupied an intermediary position between humanity and the gods.

To the ancient Egyptians, their world (the gods, the king, humanity and the dead) existed as an island of order, or Maat, surrounded by disorder, or Isfet. It was the job of the pharaoh to maintain Maat so that Egypt would remain peaceful and prosperous.

Sources: History.com; Public Broadcasting Service; Britannica - The Online Encyclopedia

## Learning with the Times

### Symbolism

To the ancient Egyptians, hieroglyphs and art symbolized the essence of real-world objects and could be invoked for positive or negative purposes. What are some modern-day objects or texts that have symbolic properties? Hint: Think about national symbols such as historic documents or flags, or jewelry such as wedding rings. Research one of these symbols using the media center resources, the Internet and the *St. Petersburg Times*. Write an oral report about the information you have found and share the report with your class.

## Ancient Egyptian social structure

Ancient Egyptian society consisted of a descending hierarchy of the gods, the king, the blessed dead and humanity. Class structure in ancient Egypt was rigid. Below the pharaoh were the nobility, educated professionals, artisans and workers, servants and farmers, and slaves. Less than 10 percent of the population belonged to the elite (noble or professional) classes, and only about 1 percent of the population could read and write. Unlike the majority of the ancient world, women in ancient Egypt had a legal status only slightly inferior to that of men. They could own property, initiate legal proceedings (including divorce) and serve as priestesses.

Sources: **Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic**: Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva by Robert Steven Bianchi; History.com; Public Broadcasting Service.



## The picture of words

Hieroglyphic writing is a system that employs characters in the form of pictures. Each individual hieroglyph may represent an object or one or more sounds in the language. The word "hieroglyph" comes from the ancient Greek phrase for sacred carving because many hieroglyphic inscriptions are found in temples or tombs.

According to ancient Egyptian tradition, hieroglyphic writing was introduced by Thoth, the god of writing and patron of scribes. The hieroglyphic system was used by the Egyptians for thousands of years. The oldest hieroglyphs date from the fourth millennium BC, while the last datable inscription was carved in the Gateway of the Roman Emperor Hadrian on the island of Philae in AD 394 by a priest, probably named Esmet-akhom. With his death, the secret of the hieroglyphs was

lost until the nineteenth century.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions are typically written right to left and arranged in rows or columns on a neutral background. The actual size of objects in the real world has no significance in hieroglyphic inscriptions. Instead, the larger the hieroglyphic depiction of an object, the more important it is.

Although hieroglyphs are often beautiful, their designers primarily sought to communicate information visually, not to create art. Unlike Western artists, they were not concerned with creating the appearance of three-dimensional reality. Instead, hieroglyphs are intentionally flat, generic representations of objects in the real world meant to capture the essence of an object.

Sources: **Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic**: Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva by Robert Steven Bianchi; History.com

## MFA will be holding a variety of events in conjunction with the exhibition. Some highlights include:

### Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic Family Day Saturday, December 17, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sponsored by Franklin Templeton Investments  
Included with museum admission.

Hands-on activities and performances for children and parents. Decipher hieroglyphs to discover the museum anew, create a cartouche-inspired ornament, make your own mini-pyramid and more!

### Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic Lecture Sunday, December 18, 3 p.m.

Included with museum admission.  
Distinguished scholar Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi introduces *Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic*, the pioneering exhibition he curated. Dr. Bianchi is known for bringing these objects and their culture vividly alive.

### Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic Educator Workshop Tuesday, January 31, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Workshop for Tampa Bay area educators, held in conjunction with the *St. Petersburg Times* Newspaper in Education program.

Visit [fine-arts.org](http://fine-arts.org) for more details and the complete listing of events.

## Vocabulary



**Amulet:** a charm (as an ornament) often inscribed with a magic incantation or symbol to aid the wearer or protect against evil (as disease or magic)

**Cartouche:** an oval or oblong figure (as on ancient Egyptian monuments) enclosing a sovereign's name

**Dynasty:** a succession of rulers of the same line of descent

**Hieroglyphic writing:** a system that employs characters in the form of pictures

**Papyrus:** the pith of the papyrus plant, especially when made into strips and pressed into a material to write on

**Pharaoh:** a ruler of ancient Egypt

**Polytheism:** belief in or worship of more than one god

**Sarcophagus:** a stone coffin

**Shabti:** a funerary figurine to assist the dead in the afterlife

**Sphinx:** an ancient Egyptian image in the form of a recumbent lion having a man's head, a ram's head or a hawk's head

**Stele:** a usually carved or inscribed stone slab or pillar used for commemorative purposes

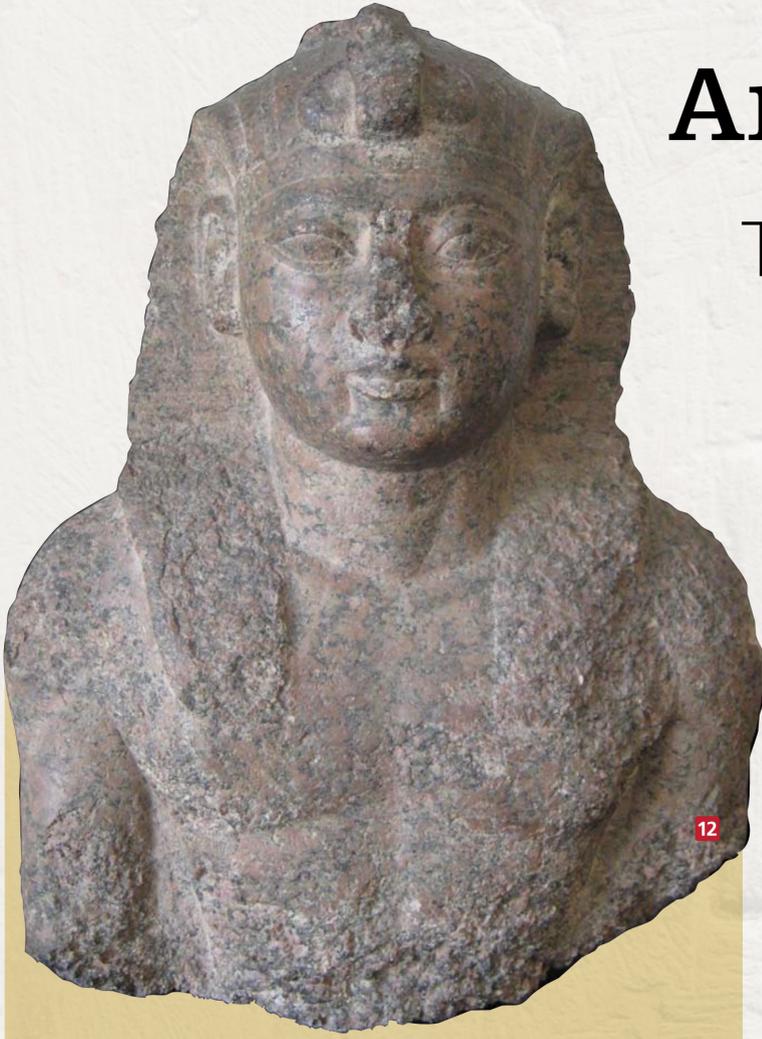
Sources: **Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic**: Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva by Robert Steven Bianchi; Britannica - The Online Encyclopedia

## Learning new words

When you study new things, you often come up against some tough vocabulary words! Most vocabulary words are learned from context clues or good old-fashioned dictionary work. While you read this poster, be sure to highlight or circle words you don't know. Try to figure out the words' meanings by looking for clues in the sentences around them. Write down your best guess, and then look the words up in a dictionary. As a group activity, make a list of the words students identified and see which ones stumped the class. Next, use these words for a news scavenger hunt. See if you can find these words in the *St. Petersburg Times*. The group that finds the most words wins the game.

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## Ancient Egypt – A Brief Chronology

4000-3200 BC	The Predynastic Period
3000-2955 BC	Dynasty 0
2955-2635 BC	The Archaic Period Dynasties I-II
2635-2155 BC	The Old Kingdom Dynasties III-VI
2155-2134 BC	The First Intermediate Period Dynasties VII-XI
2134-1785 BC	The Middle Kingdom Dynasties XII-XIII
1785-1554 BC	The Second Intermediate Period Dynasties XIV-XVII
1554-1305 BC	The New Kingdom Dynasty XVIII
1305-1080 BC	The New Kingdom The Ramesside Period Dynasties XIX-XX
1080-656 BC	The Third Intermediate Period Dynasties XXI-XXV
664-342 BC	The Late Period Dynasties XXVI-XXX
342-332 BC	The Second Persian Period
332-305 BC	The Macedonian Period
305-30 BC	The Ptolemaic Period
30 BC	The Roman Imperial Period Begins

\*Please note these time periods are approximate.

Source: Ancient Egypt – Art and Magic: Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art/Geneva by Robert Steven Bianchi

## Research activity

Find Egypt on a map. Locate the main cities and bodies of water so you can reference them in your research. Research one of these works of art or time periods to learn more about it. Write a brief research paper about the information you find. Be sure to write your paper in proper essay form and document all of your sources. Present the information to your class in an oral presentation.



### Learning with the Times

#### Social classes

Ancient Egypt was rigidly divided into social classes: the nobility, educated professionals, artisans and workers, servants and farmers, and slaves. All societies have some type of social classes. What determines a person's social class in modern America? Create a chart depicting these classes. Use information in the *St. Petersburg Times* to help you determine the classes, and then find examples of each class in the *Times*. Share your information with your class.

#### 1 An Amulet in the form of a Scorpion

Dynasty XXVI–  
Ptolemaic Period,  
664–30 BC  
Gold  
Length 1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-112

This gold pendant originally would have been suspended from a necklace or other object.

It combines the head of a goddess – perhaps Selket or Isis – with the body of a scorpion. It would have been worn by a member of the elite for protection against evil.



1



2



2

#### 2 A Procession of Bearers of Funerary Offerings Suggested to have come from the Tomb of Ny-ankh-nesut

Late Dynasty V or early Dynasty VI, 2450–2155 BC  
Painted limestone panels, individually measuring in  
length: 37<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 20<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.  
Inv. nos. EG-125a, EG-125b, EG-125c

These sculpted and painted panels once decorated the tomb of a high official named Ny-ankh-nesut. The tomb of Ny-ankh-nesut was originally discovered in or about 1917, but the exact location was lost and remained unknown until its rediscovery in 2000. The panels illustrate offerings for the benefit of Ny-ankh-nesut in the afterlife. (two of three panels shown)



3

3 A Sphinx  
Ptolemaic Period, 305–30 BC  
Limestone with traces of red pigment  
Length 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-126

The word sphinx can apply to any creature with a lion body and a different head such as a ram, falcon or human. The sphinx represented both the pharaoh and the sun god. When new, this statue would have been polished and brightly painted. Traces of red pigment can still be seen.

### Learning with the Times

#### The mighty sphinx

The word sphinx can apply to any creature with a lion body and a different head such as a ram, falcon or human. Using your imagination and the comics section of the *St. Petersburg Times*, create a unique sphinx with the body of a lion and the head of a cartoon character. With a partner, create a unique cartoon panel and creative writing story for this new character. Begin your story with the phrase "once upon a time."

4 Fragment of a Temple Relief with  
the Names and Titles of Alexander –  
the Great Macedonian Period, 323–305 BC  
Painted limestone  
Length 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-162

This raised relief from the wall of a temple contains four vertical columns of hieroglyphs recording the names and titles of Alexander the Great. Because hieroglyphs do not have capitalization or punctuation, Alexander's name in hieroglyphs is enclosed in cartouches, rings that surround the signs spelling royal names. Originally, these reliefs would have been colorfully painted. The cartouches to the right in which the name Alexander is spelled were painted yellow, the color of gold. Ancient Egyptians believed that the skin of their gods was made of gold. Painting the hieroglyphs that spell the name Alexander yellow in imitation of gold associates him with the gods.

5 Part of a  
Funerary Broad  
Collar with Falcon-  
Headed Terminals  
Ptolemaic Period,  
305–30 BC  
Gold, with inlays  
of semiprecious  
stones and glass  
paste  
Length 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-184

This necklace would be placed on the neck of a deceased person to ensure resurrection. The necklace is made of gold, representing the color of the sun and the skin of the gods. Its blue inlays represent flowers, which sprout and grow after a period of dormancy. Its shape symbolizes the horizon where the sun rises and sets, represented by the ancient Egyptians as a valley bordered on each side by a high mountain and guarded by a falcon. When the broad collar was placed on the mummy, the head would appear to be rising from it in much the same way as the sun would rise from the valley.



5

6 The God Horus as a  
Falcon  
Dynasty XXI–XXV,  
1080–655 BC  
Bronze, originally with inlaid  
eyes  
Height approx. 18 in.  
Inv. no. EG-187

The ancient Egyptians associated the falcon with Horus, god of the sky, because it was the highest-flying bird in their environment.



6

7 An Architectural False Door  
Dynasty VI, 2290–2155 BC  
Painted limestone  
Height 43<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-254

The purpose of a false door was to permit the symbolic passage of the spirit of the deceased to exit to partake of offerings and then return to the tomb. This false door is inscribed for an elite woman named Henat. Elite women during most periods of ancient Egypt's history were more liberated than their counterparts in other cultures.



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### Learning with the Times

#### The art of communication

Think about some other cultures that have used pictures and symbols as a means of communication. What impact did this form of communication have on each culture? How do we use pictures and symbols to communicate? Hint: Think about traffic signage, emoticons and text messaging. Look through the *St. Petersburg Times* for examples of symbols that represent communication. Make a list of all of the symbols you find and share them with your class.

8 A Palette for the Seven Sacred Oils  
Dynasty V, 2450–2290 BC  
Alabaster  
Length 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-334 (see page 2)

The seven vertical columns of hieroglyphs contain the Egyptian nouns for each of seven sacred oils, followed by a hieroglyph of a basket, or lidded ointment jar, in which the oil was symbolically contained. The circular wells were probably intended to contain a small amount of each oil for the deceased. The seven sacred oils were important for ancient Egyptian burial and offering rituals. Their composition is unknown to us.

9 A Statuette of a Baker  
Dynasty VI,  
2290–2155 BC  
Painted limestone  
Height 11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-34 (see back page)

This statuette of a baker would have been placed in a tomb in order to ensure an eternal supply of bread for the benefit of the deceased in the afterlife.

10 A Statuette Inscribed  
for a Pharaoh Named  
Psametik  
Dynasty XXVI, 664–525 BC  
Bronze  
Height 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-358

This statuette depicts a pharaoh in a kneeling position. Pharaoh had a unique status between humanity and the gods.



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### Learning with the Times

#### Egyptians and science

Egyptian scientists were very interested in practical engineering and observing nature. For example, the pyramids and temples display a good knowledge of geometry and engineering. Because the Nile flood was so important to Egyptian farming, scientists worked out ways to measure how high the flood was going each year. They kept accurate records and good calendars. They also engineered ways to move water from the Nile to outlying farms in the desert. Science is all around us. Everywhere you look there are examples of science: in industry, in nature, in technology, in architecture. For two weeks, keep a journal of all of the examples of science you observe in your daily business from getting up in the morning to going to bed each night. Also, look for examples of science and scientific principles in the *St. Petersburg Times*. Identify the category of science for each observation. Write a well-developed essay about how your life would be different without science. Share your list and essay with your class.

11 Lid from an  
Anthropoid  
Sarcophagus  
Dynasty XXI–XXII, 1080–  
720 BC  
Wood, gessoed and  
painted  
Height 62 in.  
Inv. no. EG-364

The object is designed as an anthropoid, or human-shaped, lid of a sarcophagus, or stone coffin. The name of the owner of this particular lid is not known.

12 The Pharaoh Rameses  
II, called The Great  
Dynasty XIX, reign of  
Pharaoh Rameses II,  
1290–1224 BC  
Red granite  
Height 28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Inv. no. EG-133

This bust was excavated by Edouard Naville, a famous Swiss Egyptologist, in 1891. The statue is thought to depict Rameses II, one of the longest lived of all the ancient Egyptian pharaohs.



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