

Ancient Egyptian Art

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A couple of things surface for this culture hog when I contemplate ancient Egyptian art. One is the magnitude of the ancient Egyptian art pieces we have uncovered throughout history; and the other is the mystique behind our uncovering that which was purportedly not to be uncovered and I wrote myself a critical essays about this.

Granted, you'd have to be rendered absolutely senseless by a turnip truck crashing into your motorbike or something...to not appreciate the beauty and appeal of ancient Egyptian art—the sculptures; the stone carvings; the cave, tomb, and other paintings; and, of, course, the pyramids. The technique of frontalism (the full body face-front but the head in profile) is astounding. The methods of pigmentation (using berries, kohl, and other natural items to induce color—which the Egyptians used for makeup and other dying needs, as well) are nothing short of genius. The symbolism ascribed with the sun, the scarab, the asps, and the sacred cat are highly influential. And the ensconcing of hieroglyphs, as representative and characteristic of communication and expression at once, has not been eclipsed by any other language system...or has not been studied to the same extremes, anyway. I mean, yes, the artifacts as we consider them are important to our understanding of ancient civilization as a forerunner to all of our culture, medicine, and cosmic experience, but we also reduced ourselves to the most common form of thieving—as grave robbers. So this treatment of ancient Egyptian art (though typically reverent) creeps me out. And with good cause: the Egyptians, advanced as they were, somehow foretold of their getting looted and had specially designed curses to post. One appears, for example, in the Dynasty 5 pyramid texts, and reads: "As for anyone who shall lay a finger on this pyramid and this temple which belong to me and my ka, he will have laid his finger on the Mansion of Horus in the firmament, he will have offended the Lady of the Mansion ... his affair will be judged by the Ennead and he will be nowhere and his house will be nowhere; he will be one proscribed, one who eats himself." Okay, so one curse does not the whole phenomenon make, but thereafter, many grave diggers, er, excavation scientists, archaeologists, and related assistants died miserable deaths within days (or hours?) of uncovering and "touching" the ancient Egyptian art and artifacts. So the double-edged sword (if you are a believer in the myths and mystique as heartily as you are a follower of science and history and all) is one we continue to wield, use, and impale ourselves on. Though, replicas are a whole nother story. I bought a Goddess Selket statue for my friend one year and nothing has happened to either of us. Yet.