



MUMMY MASK OF A WOMAN

Plaster with original polychrome
Middle Egypt, possibly Tuna-el-Gebbel/Antinoopolis
Roman Period, circa 100-140 AD
Height 30 cm

Funerary mask of a young woman with lifelike features. The large eyes emphasised with a thick black kohl line and the pupils painted black, thick bushy eyebrows above. The nose is long and straight, the mouth delicate with slightly up-turned corners, a dimple on the chin. Red pigment is visible on the lips. The coiffure consists of evenly wavy hair painted black and small braids on the forehead, at the temples and very long one behind the visible ears. The woman is wearing stirrup earrings with three pearls and a beaded strand around her neck. The skin tone is very light pink lending the face depth and realism. Like a portrait, the mask may have been modelled on the true features of the deceased women.

Masks like this reflect the profound change that the Greco-Roman world brought to Egypt. A more naturalistic depiction of a person's face replaced the stylized art of Egypt's Dynastic Periods; hieroglyphs and other symbols, painted on elaborate sarcophagi, fell out of favour. These funerary masks were reserved for the elite who were mummified, and then buried in a simple wooden coffin within small chapels, besides other members of their family.

PROVENANCE

Former private collection England, Sotheby's London 1984-7-14 Lot 48; private collection France acquired at Galerie Orient & Occident; PBA Paris 2012-6-01 Lot 133; private collection Switzerland

PUBLICATION

A. Müller, *Ägyptens schöne Gesichter: Die Mumienmasken der römischen Kaiserzeit und ihre Funktion im Totenritual*, AF 39, Reichert, Wiesbaden 2021, Inv.Nr. 408

LITERATURE

G. Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, F. Steiner, Wiesbaden 1974
M.F. Aubert et R. Cortopassi, *Portraits funéraires de l'Égypte romaine*, Musée du Louvre, Paris 2004