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MUMMY MASK
Egypt
Late Ptolemaic/early Roman Period, 1st century BC
Polychrome and gilt cartonnage (linen with plaster)
Height 47.5 cm

The wrapped head and shoulders of mummies were often covered with a mask that served as a copy of the face of the deceased. It was believed that the soul of the deceased (ba), in the form of a human-headed bird, left the body during the day and returned to it at night. The mask was a duplicate head and face that ensured that the ba would recognize the mummy in case the body decayed.

The mask is richly decorated and has many finely executed details, such as the ousekh collar and the frieze of rosettes on the lower border. The very expressive eyes are made from inlayed glass and obsidian. The cartonnage was set in forms and coated with gesso before the paint and gilding were applied. The lapels of the wig are decorated with protective deities like Osiris and Re-Horakhty. Isis and Nephtys are depicted on the sides and several eyes-oudjat., A winged beetle in slight relief spreads its wings at the top of the head and a tiara circles the forehead. The eye shadow is an unusual and rare aspect of this type of mask. Traces of linen strips and bitumen used to fix the mask on the mummy are still visible on the cartonnage..

PROVENANCE

Private collection Jean Deriat France, acquired around 1965 at Le Véel gallery Paris. Deriat started his collection in 1950, he mainly bought at gallery Le Veel, which closed after the death of the owner in 1975

LITERATURE

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