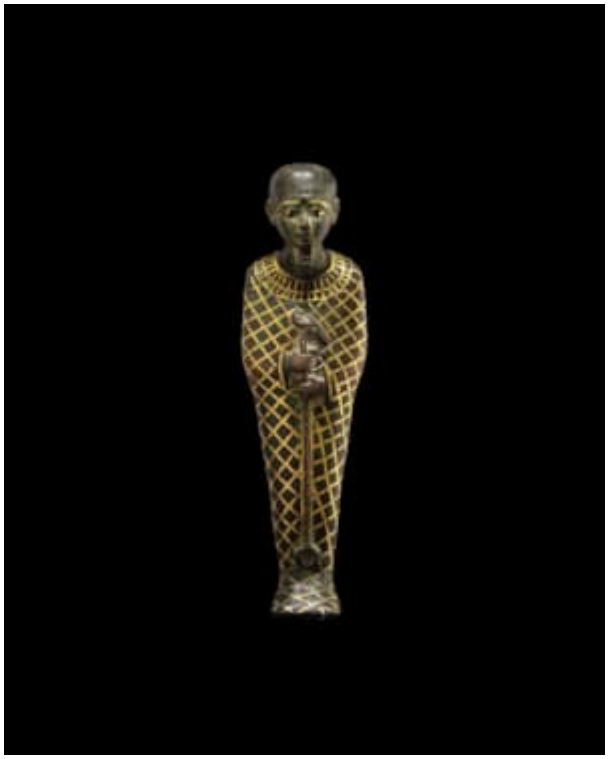


Gold and Bronze Statuette of Ptah

Late Period, 750-332 B.C., Egypt

Bronze and gold

H: 17 cm, W: 4 cm

A bronze statuette of the Egyptian god Ptah. The mummiform figure is wrapped in a shroud with an inlaid gold lattice and usekh collar. At the rear, there is a trace of the collar's counterpoise, which would have originally been inlaid too. The god is depicted in a traditional way, wearing a close-fitting skull-cap and a false beard of the short, square kind typically worn by Ptah. The eyebrows and eyes are enhanced with gold inlay. Two hands emerge from the shroud to hold the was-sceptre, a symbol of divine power. The gold inlay is exceptionally well preserved.

Ptah was a creator god and a patron of craftsmen, especially sculptors and silversmiths. Originally the local deity of Memphis, the capital of Egypt from the 1st Dynasty onwards, the importance of the city led to the expansion of Ptah's cult across the whole of Egypt. Alongside his wife Sekhmet and son Nefertum, Ptah was one of the Memphite Triad of deities. The sacred bull Apis was seen as a manifestation of Ptah, or his intermediary, and had a stall in the great temple of Ptah at Memphis. In the New Kingdom, Ptah's role emphasised his position as an intercessor with humans and listener to their prayers – the enclosure for his sanctuary at Memphis features large ears carved into the walls. Through the Third Intermediate Period and into the Ptolemaic Period, Ptah was increasingly associated with the royal family and coronations were held in his temple.

Literature:

The Egyptian Revival Sale, Bonhams, London, 23 January 2008, Lot 37. (miss-attributed)