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Fragmentary Head of Amenhotep II

Circa 1428-1397 B.C., Reign of Amenhotep II, 18th Dynasty, New Kingdom, Egypt

Granite

H: 23 cm, W: 15 cm, D: 20 cm

A fragmentary head carved from black granite, identified as pharaoh Amenhotep II. The pharaoh wears the striped nemes headdress, with two large coils of the uraeus serpent remaining above the centre of the forehead. The wide band at the base of the headdress covers the forehead and extends down to the leaf ear, which is carved in only simple detail – most of Amenhotep II's portraits position the uraeus at the bottom of the band, but this feature is no longer visible. The beginnings of the pleated lappets that would have extended onto the king's shoulders are visible to the left of the neck, and the headdress is drawn towards a gathered pigtail at the base of the skull. Three horizontal rings of this gathering remain.

The proper left side of the face is the best preserved, with the squared ends of the eyebrows and extended cosmetic lines widening towards the edges of the face. The lips are small but well defined, with particular emphasis on the projecting lower lip and a pronounced depression between the base of the lips and the squarish, almost double, chin. The Adam's apple is also clearly pronounced.

Some scholars divide Amenhotep II's portraits into two types: an earlier, youthful type, and a later, idealising type. This example would fall into the former type, which combines a short face with full cheeks, squarish chin, slight smile, and flared cosmetic lines. Most portraits of Amenhotep II have been found in the Theban area, so this portrait may well have originally been part of a seated or standing statue in a temple court or sanctuary at Karnak or in Amenhotep's mortuary temple on the west bank at Thebes.[1]

Amenhotep II (r. circa 1428-1397 B.C.) was the seventh pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, son of Thutmose III. Although his reign lasted less than thirty years, he brought several military campaigns to their successful conclusions in Syria-Palestine to the northeast and in Nubia to the south. He spearheaded ambitious building projects all along the Nile, and left several unique texts praising his athletic abilities. Like Tutankhamun, Amenhotep II was one of the small number of pharaohs whose mummy was discovered still within his own well-preserved tomb in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes (Tomb 35).

Exhibitions

The Collector's Eye: Masterpieces of Egyptian Art from the Thalassic Collection, Ltd., Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, US, 11 April 2001 – 6 January 2002, no. 7.

Literature:

The Dikran Kelekian Collection, Part I, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, 21-23 October 1953, Lot 36 (part).

Peter Lacovara, Betsy Teasley Trope, Sue H. D'Auria (eds.), The Collector's Eye: Masterpieces of Egyptian Art from the Thalassic Collection, Ltd., exhibition catalogue, Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, 2001, no. 7, pp. 12-13.