

DAVID AARON



Sculptor's Model of a Royal or Divine Head

175 x 14.4 x 5.5 cm (68 ⁷/₈ x 5 ⁵/₈ x 2 ¹/₈ inches)

Granite

Egypt

A finely carved head in profile in low relief, facing right. The figure is shown wearing a tripartite wig, identifying them as either a royal or a deity. The facial features are delineated clearly: a straight, gently sloping nose; wide almost-squared lips, upturned into a smile; and an almond-shaped eye framed by bold cosmetic lines that extend right up to the edge of the wig. The figure's clothing from the neck downwards and the area to the rear of the wig are left largely uncarved and only outlined in silhouette. The relief is carved from the granite known as 'fine granite' mined from Aswan at the First Nile Cataract in Egypt. The light-grey to pinkish-grey stone was used only rarely during the New Kingdom and the Ptolemaic Period.

Many small sculptures and reliefs from ancient Egypt seem to have been left deliberately incomplete, and several together appear to demonstrate the successive stages of the carving process. Pieces such as this are thought to be sculptor's models, created to demonstrate the technique required to create finished works. Another theory is that works such as this were created as votive gifts, to be dedicated in temples, which is supported by the inscriptions and find sites of some of these works. However, due to an almost total lack of painted examples (compared to the colourful paintwork of completed limestone sculptures), and the fragmentary nature of some of the works, it seems that this was not their primary function. It may have been that the models were dedicated later in their lifespans, perhaps to the creator's patron deity.

Exhibitions

Centenaire de Champollion, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1922.

Literature:

Master Sculpture from Four Millennia, Sotheby's, Paris, 13 November 2025

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