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Egyptian Art (Art And Ideas)



Synopsis

Ancient Egyptian art has an enduring fascination. From the geometrical precision of the great pyramids at Giza to the golden treasures found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, the products of the Egyptian civilization attract and intrigue. Far from being art work in the modern sense, they represent the concrete expression of a profound belief in the primacy of the Egyptian way of life and the continuation of the spirit in the afterlife.

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Customer Reviews

Written by British curator Malek (In the Shadow of the Pyramids: Egypt During the Old Kingdom), Egyptian Art is another in Phaidon's solid "Art & Ideas" series. It follows the tradition of other titles in the series. The other three titles were published to coincide with the international traveling exhibition "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramid," seen recently at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (MOMA). When the Pyramids Were Built is a streamlined version of the official catalog. With no index, it will not be a first choice for reference, but Arnold (the curator of the Egyptian department at MOMA) provides a well-written and very accessible text. Its readability, combined with the quality of the photographs and the modest price, makes this an excellent purchase for most public libraries. The 25 internationally respected Egyptologists who contributed to Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids provide a valuable look at recent developments in the field. In particular, the redating of many artifacts results in a very different view of the artistic trends of the period. The profuse illustrations vary in quality, but their sheer number, added to the high-level scholarship of the text and the three detailed indexes (general, sites, and owners of the artifacts), makes this an important

book for all academic and most medium and large public libraries. Egyptian Treasures from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo covers a much greater time span than the other three titles. The text, written by a virtual who's who in Egyptology, is a bit uneven--as is usually the case with so many authors. However, all of the text is comprehensible, and some of it (such as the argument that Tutankhamun was not murdered) is fascinating. Unfortunately, there is no index, but the layout is chronological, giving some hope of finding specific artifacts. The real treasure of the book lies in Araldo De Luca's stunning photographs. Often, De Luca sees with his camera's eye things that few visitors would notice. The book's large trim allows for many life-size illustrations, and at all times the illustrations do justice to a phenomenal collection. Highly recommended for all academic and most public libraries.-Mary Morgan Smith, Northland P.L., Pittsburgh Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"By placing the material firmly in its social and cultural context, Malek is able to explain many of the subtleties and complexities of the relationship between life and art in the pharaonic period. No other book on Egyptian art gives quite so strong a sense of the painting and statuary as almost inevitable products of the culture of ancient Egypt."-Ian Shaw, Department of Archaeology, Liverpool University "A fascinating survey of how Egypt's own history influenced its art forms and genres over three thousand years."-Betsy Bryan, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore On the Art & Ideas series "Art & Ideas has broken new ground in making accessible authoritative views on periods, movements and concepts in art. As a series it represents a real advance in publishing."-Sir Nicholas Serota, Director, Tate London "The format is wonderful and offers what had long been missing in academic studies: usable manuals for specific themes or periods... I am definitely not alone in welcoming Art & Ideas as a precious set of teaching tools."-Joachim Pissarro, Yale University "Phaidon's series may prove to be the pick of the crop. It boasts expert but undogmatic texts and a wealth of illustrations."-The Sunday Telegraph

The inside of the book was perfect - clean and no highlighting but the outside looked dirty but then again white is such a tough color to stay clean looking. Best Sharon

Perfect! Thank you!

For about twenty years I have taught a college course in Egyptian art, experimenting with various textbooks. Malek is a recognized authority in the field. He also knows how to write clearly. His

selection of objects is excellent. All in all, I would say that this is the best book to start with. It is also very sound in its judgments.

A well-written and interesting discussion of Egyptian art, its origins, its rapid development during the early stages of the Old Kingdom, and its variations throughout 3000 years of Egyptian civilization. I especially enjoyed the discussions on the continuities and the variations of styles under various foreign occupations, such as during the rule of the Hittites, the Libyans and of course the Greeks and Romans. Also very informative was the focus on the social function and purpose of art in Ancient Egypt, which makes clear why Egyptian art remained relatively constant over three millennia. Finally, the liberal and intelligent use and placement of illustrations throughout truly sets this book apart. I definitely plan to read more books from this Phaidon series.

Jaromir MALEK. 1999. *Egyptian Art*. London: Phaidon Press. Pp. 447 with appendices, glossary, map and photographs. ISBN 0-7148-3627-3 (hb). This book by Egyptologist Jaromir Malek is a concise, affordable introduction to Egyptian art in ten compact chapters, each one of which is a self-contained essay. Malek begins with an ethnographic description of the ancient land and discussions of art and architecture in paleolithic and dynastic times. His text follows the standard chronology of Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. Separate chapters cover the Amarna interlude, Egypt under the Greeks and Romans and how Egyptian themes and images have been perceived and presented in Western art in the recent past. Malek presents his synthesis of design and meaning through discussing numerous photographs gracing the text. But, he clearly separates the didactic and rhetorical use of design conventions from historical events and social life. He writes "...the artistic record should not be taken as a comprehensive statement about the mentality or daily preoccupations of the Egyptians" (p. 21). The Egyptians created their art primarily "...as a carrier of ideas" (p. 61) for the state and for religious institutions and used it to fulfill political and ritual functions. Little was created solely for its value as design or image. *Egyptian Art* is not a social history of Egypt, but Malek carefully places the evolution of design elements (hieroglyphics, images) and objects (statues, temples, tombs) in sequences based on dynastic dates. He briefly explains the rationale of important conventions and design choices; examples are why a human body is depicted in frontal view while a face is profiled, why a right arm may be attached to a left shoulder, and why color and cardinal direction are important compositional elements. The book, however, is not a monograph on canonical design rules or belief systems expressed in art. Malek wisely does not clutter the text with explanations of hieroglyphics and how to read them; they are treated as

elements in a structural ensemble. This book is a clear and thoughtful introduction to ancient Egyptian art by a specialist whose text speaks of experience and balanced judgment. Extensively illustrated, the book is a measured treatment of this technical subject and rewards patient reading. General readers and beginning students will like it. Notes on further reading are keyed to each chapter. A glossary, lists of deities and kings, a timeline and a map provide useful reference tools. To his credit, Malek does not wrestle with fantastic claims made by some students of ancient Egypt; he graciously dismisses them. Both author and publisher faced trade-offs in bringing an affordable and useful book to market. The historical scope leaves scant room to completely explore pieces and buildings and the smallish page size diminishes the visual detail and impact of the plates. Nonetheless, this compact introduction to the stylistic and iconological evolution of Egyptian art is handsome and worthy.

Great! Thank you so much!

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