

Kimbell Art Museum

QUEEN NEFERTARI'S EGYPT

Transcript of the Acoustiguide Audio Tour

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0. DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

ERIC LEE:

Hello, I'm Eric Lee, director of the Kimbell Art Museum, and I'm pleased to welcome you to *Queen Nefertari's Egypt*. The superb works of art you will see today come to us from the renowned Museo Egizio in Turin, Italy, which holds one of the most important collections of ancient Egyptian art outside of Cairo.

Nefertari was a celebrated queen of ancient Egypt, and the beloved royal wife of pharaoh Ramesses II—one of the greatest rulers in Egypt's long history. He reigned during the New Kingdom period that lasted from about 1539 to 1075 BC. Here's Jennifer Casler Price, the Kimbell's curator of Asian, African, and Ancient American art.



Queen before the divine scribe Thoth. Mural painting, Tomb of Nefertari.
Photo: S. Vannini. © DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

The New Kingdom Period was really a period of glory and maturity for Egyptian culture. It's left us many legacies, such as the great temples of Luxor and Karnak and the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens.

ERIC LEE:

In 1904, Ernesto Schiaparelli, then director of the Museo Egizio, and a team of archaeologists discovered Nefertari's tomb in the Valley of the Queens. While Schiaparelli uncovered an extraordinary tomb, most of its contents had been looted in ancient times. Nonetheless, it remains one of the largest and most elaborately decorated tombs ever found.

Schiaparelli also made other significant discoveries while excavating the nearby village of Deir el-Medina, home to the artisans who produced royal tombs. That find provides us with insights into the daily lives of the builders, craftsmen, and their families who lived there.

Jennifer will be joined by two others who will guide you on this journey back in time exploring Egyptian culture and beliefs. Dr. Christian Greco, director of the Museo Egizio, and Julián Zugazagoitia, director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City.

We also want to acknowledge that this exhibition is taking place under unique circumstances. Rest assured we have taken measures to create as safe an environment as possible, including limiting the number of visitors in the galleries. To help maintain social distancing and visitor flow in the exhibition, we kindly ask that you avoid retracing your steps and follow the suggested path as indicated by the arrows.

In addition, selected wall text and video content is available in the mobile app for your convenience. We hope you enjoy the tour!

1. GALLERY INTRODUCTION

NARRATOR:

Before you go into the exhibition, we'd like to give you a sense of what you will see today. *Queen Nefertari's Egypt* celebrates the role of women during the New Kingdom period, when Egyptian civilization was at its height, a five-century span more than three thousand years ago. These women—not just great royal wives, but also sisters, daughters, and mothers of pharaohs—are brought to life through majestic statues, exquisite jewelry and personal objects, votive stelae, and intricately painted coffins. In addition, there are tools and various items of daily life from the artisan village of Deir-el-Medina, home to the craftsmen who made the royal tombs.



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Nefertari, whose name means “beautiful companion,” was the favorite wife and “First Royal Spouse” of the great pharaoh Ramesses II—builder of grand monuments, vast tombs, and monumental temples.

Nefertari was not only beautiful, she was also intelligent, literate, and a valuable aide to her husband in his diplomatic work. Director of the Museo Egizio, Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

We know of her role and importance thanks to the fact that there is a beautiful, small temple constructed in Abu Simbel, a small temple devoted to his wife, Nefertari, and there is an inscription on the façade of the temple where it's written, “To her for whom the sun rises.” So she's so beautiful and so important that every morning the sun comes up in the sky to illuminate her.

NARRATOR:

When you pass through the doorway into the exhibition, you'll see on the large wall at the back of this gallery a photograph of this temple—which is small only in comparison to the pharaoh's own. In addition to the temple at Abu Simbel, Ramesses II showed his love and respect for Nefertari by ordering the construction of her tomb in the Valley of the Queens.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

In ancient Egypt, when the king ascended to the throne, the most important thing was to start building his home tomb. The tomb was the house of eternity, and this process was carried out during the New Kingdom by the workmen of the so-called village of Deir el-Medina.

NARRATOR:

And in 1904, when Ernesto Schiaparelli and his team were excavating in the Valley of the Queens, they discovered the tomb of Nefertari. Schiaparelli wrote:

SCHIAPARELLI:

Although the grave goods found were very few, our Mission nevertheless rejoiced in the discovery of this tomb as one of the most important results obtained, since, apart from being the tomb of one of the most famous Egyptian queens, it was also of a singular beauty . . .

NARRATOR:

You will see nearly every object Schiaparelli found in Nefertari's tomb later in the exhibition. Now, as you prepare to enter the exhibition, it's important to remember that religion was paramount in ancient Egypt—in the temple complex, in the tomb, and in every undertaking of daily life.

The ancient Egyptians lived with forces they did not understand. Storms, earthquakes, floods, and droughts were frightening and enigmatic. The Egyptians turned to religious cults to face their fears, developing a huge pantheon of gods and goddesses who they thought governed all aspects of living.

Along with the cults of worship came works of art. For example, in the first section of the exhibition, you will see four monumental stone statues of the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet. You can see an image of her on your device.

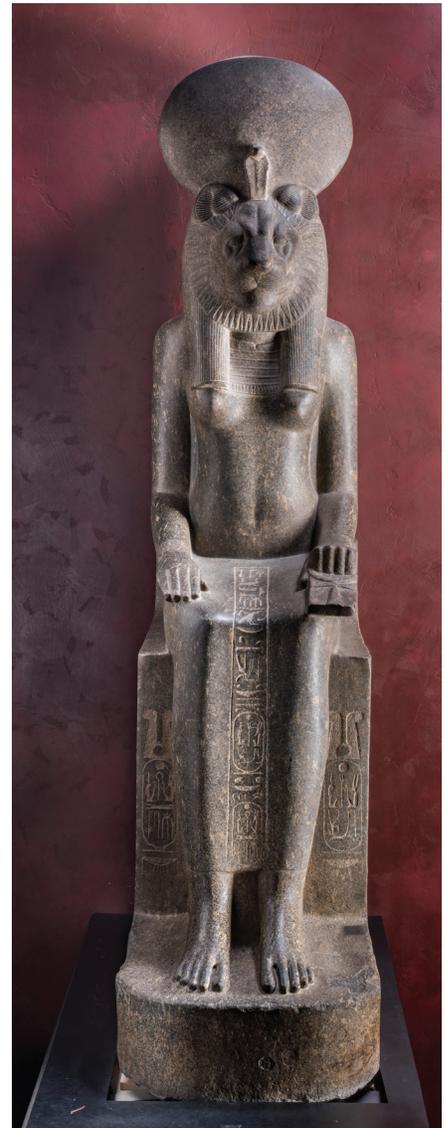
Worshippers made offerings to a different statue of Sekhmet each morning and evening of the year to ask for her protection and to ensure that she remained in her gentle, domesticated form: the cat goddess Bastet. Curator Jennifer Casler Price:

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

Sekhmet is one of the most frightening Egyptian deities. And she is the goddess of divine wrath, the plague. And she is the fiercest hunter in all of Egypt. She is the daughter of the sun god, Ra. And she personifies the sun's rays, with the power to give life or take it away. You'll actually see that her lion head, which has a mane, but also a long women's wig, the mane actually looks like the rays of the sun.

NARRATOR:

According to the Egyptians, Sekhmet was sent to punish mankind, but when she grew too fond of her assignment, her father, the sun god Ra, decides to stop her by taking advantage of her newly acquired taste for human blood.



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DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

So he actually tricks her. He makes her drink, some sources say, red wine. Some other sources say beer colored by red, and actually Sekhmet thinks that she's drinking blood, so she drinks it very greedily and she becomes drunk and she falls asleep. When she awakes, she's not any more the violent lioness, but she's Hathor. She's the goddess of love and harmony.

NARRATOR:

As you will discover, the lives of the pharaohs and queens of Egypt were intertwined with those of their gods and goddesses.

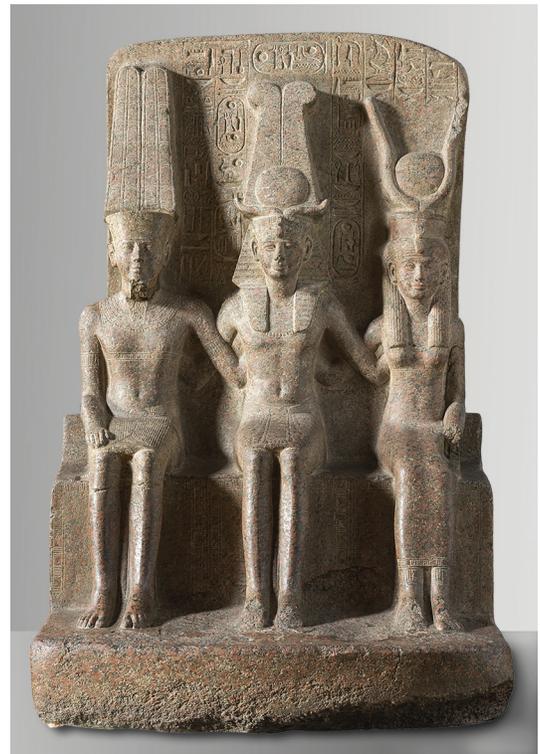
2. RELIGION, THE TEMPLE, GODDESSES

NARRATOR:

Egyptian pharaohs built their palaces from organic materials like mud bricks, wood, and linen. The relatively temporary structures reflected the nature of life on earth. Tombs, on the other hand, were built to be a home for eternity in the afterlife.

Temples, dedicated to Egyptian deities, were also intended to last forever. Built of stone or carved into a cliff, they contained imposing images of gods and goddesses—like the four statues of the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet you can see on either side of the gallery.

Because the pharaoh was considered an intermediary to the gods, it was his sacred duty to dress, feed, and care for the statues of the gods within. The statue of three seated figures at the center of this gallery comes from the temple of Amun in Karnak, the most important temple in the ancient capital of Thebes. Julián Zugazagoitia.



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JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

This statue of Ramesses II seated between the gods Amun and Mut is one of the major masterpieces that today the Turin Museum holds among its precious collections. And you can see how all of the details of both the gods and the pharaoh come very subtly and very beautifully carved in this piece of granite.

NARRATOR:

His position between the creator and sun god Amun and Amun's spouse, the goddess Mut, symbolizes the pharaoh's relationship to and status among the gods. Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

The statue shows how there is no separation between the divinity and kingship itself. It's the duty of the king to guarantee the continuity of the balance of justice, of *ma'at*, ensuring the divine order through the cult of the gods. The king himself is the only insurance that we have that order can be there.

NARRATOR:

The figures are all the same size, showing that all are equally important. The figure of Ramesses II also features standard indicators of a pharaoh.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

It's seated on a throne. It wears the so-called *nemes* crown, and on top of the crown we see coiled a cobra, which rises up on the forehead of the king, and we call it *uraeus*. It's a symbol of his royalty.

3. WOMEN'S ROLE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

NARRATOR:

As you enter this gallery, the large case on the wall in front of you contains images of goddesses who take on the forms and attributes of animals prevalent in Egypt: hippopotamuses, crocodiles, lions, vultures, and snakes. Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

And these same attributes are then transferred to the women in the royal palace, specifically the wives of the pharaohs. So, Nefertari may be considered an incarnation of Hathor, the mother goddess.

NARRATOR:

As the goddess of love, sensuality, maternity, joy, and music, Hathor was worshipped by queens and commoners alike. She is often depicted with a woman's face, cow's ears, and a curled wig, as seen on a stela in this case. Her beautiful face is flanked by bouquets on either side and a row of images below. Dr. Christian Greco.



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DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

We see a procession of four females, which are drum players, led by a male devotee, and this might refer to one of the numerous festivals that were dedicated to the goddess Hathor.

NARRATOR:

Other objects nearby explore the ways in which women were active in ancient Egypt. Nowadays we might be surprised to learn that Egyptian women were lively participants in all spheres of society. This included in palaces, in temples, in the fields—even in the courtroom.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

All women, commoners, queens, and goddesses, had the right to own property; they had the right to run businesses, and they could bring cases before courts of law.

Now, despite this unusual legal equality, women were still primarily tasked with raising children and running the household. We do know that pharaohs married multiple wives. They did this to emphasize their wealth, to facilitate diplomatic alliances, and to ensure their line of succession.

NARRATOR:

There was a hierarchy among the pharaoh's wives. They all lived together in the royal women's palace along with sisters, aunts, children, and their servants and attendants.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

Although the residents were primarily women and children, the administration was conducted entirely by men. These men were the overseers, they were scribes, they were butlers and they were guards. There is a block statue in a case nearby that depicts one of these overseers, named Keret.

NARRATOR:

You can see Keret in a case on the right as you make your way through the gallery.



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4. BEAUTY

NARRATOR:

On both sides of this gallery, you'll see objects that reveal how important personal appearance was to the Egyptians. Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

In ancient Egypt, men and women paid great attention to beauty and fashion. And the wealthy delighted in sporting the latest clothing, hair, jewelry, and makeup styles. Many Egyptian names, such as Nefertari, incorporate the word 'nefer,' which actually means beautiful.

A pleasant appearance served another purpose: it symbolized perfection and it symbolized harmony, and that was both in this world but also in the afterlife. Royalty would be buried with elaborate toilet sets, all demonstrating the value that the owners placed on cosmetics.

NARRATOR:

In the inset wall cases at left are an array of containers and implements that would be used in the beauty routines of ancient Egyptians.

You will see a tall slender cylindrical-shaped pot would have held the black eye makeup called kohl. It is inscribed with a cartouche that bears the name of Queen Tiye. Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

It's very nice to think that this might have been a personal object of the queen or may be a royal gift, a personal object which she would use to make her eyes up, which is very important.

NARRATOR:

Beyond beautification, makeup served a medicinal and protective purpose in everyday life.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

Kohl is ground from a black mineral called stibnite. And then it would be mixed with some kind of a fat, so that you could apply it around your eyes. And this mineral actually provided protection from bacteria and from infections and also even the harsh rays of the sun.



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NARRATOR:

As you move through the gallery, notice the case with three exquisite beaded necklaces, worn for adornment and protection, in this life and in the afterlife.

And in the last inset wall case on the left are small vases made from precious materials such as alabaster and colorful glass that would have held perfume or ointment. These were luxury items of the elite and were often included in their tombs. Julián Zugazagoitia.

JULIÁN ZUGAZAGOITIA:

One thing that, in looking at the small glass vases, comes to mind is how difficult it is to create an object like this. So, one has to always look at some of these objects understanding why they were also just accessible to the pharaohs, because it was perhaps, technologically at the time, one of the peaks of what they could achieve.



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5. WOMEN'S ROLE IN RELIGION

NARRATOR:

Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

Religion suffused every part of ancient Egyptian life. We have seen this now with Egyptian royalty in that they have to please the gods; they invoke the gods for protection; that it's a part of daily life for the royal sector of society. But it was a part of daily life for all levels of society.

NARRATOR:

Egyptian women served integral roles in the practice of religion. Some queens were temple priestesses who entertained the gods and goddesses, others played important roles in religious celebrations, representing the female aspect of the divine on Earth. Some Egyptian queens were even deified. One such ruler was Queen Ahmose-Nefertari, who is depicted in this beautiful statuette. She was the wife of Pharaoh Ahmose I and lived almost 300 years before *our* Queen Nefertari, wife of Ramesses II.



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JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

And what I love about this image is that you really get a sense of her spirit. You can see her eyes that are rimmed with the kohl makeup. You can see the Egyptian wig that she's wearing; a feathered headdress or crown. And then, this wonderful robe that really kind of envelopes her very feminine body. And the fact that her left leg is just slightly bent forward—you can kind of see the knee—it gives the statue a sense of movement, that's otherwise a fairly static image. It's really, really an exquisite piece.

NARRATOR:

Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

We have the family religion, very important in the village of the workmen who created the tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens. They had their personal, private religion, which was performed at home.

NARRATOR:

As you move into the next area of the exhibition you will see a large image of the Valley of the Kings. You will also find displays of carved stone stelae.

6. RELIGION IN DEIR EL-MEDINA

NARRATOR:

The workers' village of Deir el-Medina was home to craftsmen and laborers who built the royal tombs in the nearby Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens. The people who lived in this isolated area had unique religious cults. Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

They developed certain religious practices and they had certain deities that were particular to the village that you don't normally see in other parts of Egypt or even referencing Ramesses II. And the two most important are Pharaoh Amenhotep I and Queen Ahmose-Nefertari.

NARRATOR:

Deir el-Medina was founded by Queen Ahmose-Nefertari and her son Amenhotep I. Centuries later, workers and artisans living in the village would build the tombs of Ramesses II and his beloved Queen Nefertari—we'll explore her tomb soon.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

After the deaths of Ahmose-Nefertari and her son, they became venerated as the protector god and goddess of the village.

NARRATOR:

As you move around this gallery, you will encounter several stelae—flat, upright markers, like tombstones. Often made from limestone, they are then carved, painted, or both. Many stelae are funerary objects. They often depict the deceased receiving offerings to sustain them in the afterlife or bestowing offerings to gods and goddesses to attain an eternal life. One is the Stela of Penbuy.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

If you look at the stela, you can see that in the top register you have an image of the goddess Ahmose-Nefertari, and she's seated in front of a table. And kneeling in front of her is the worker Penbuy, and he is making an offering to her. There's some kind of a vessel on top of the table, and then there's also a lotus. The lotus is the symbol of regeneration.

NARRATOR:

If you look closely, you'll see two carved images in the background. Those are the ears of Ahmose-Nefertari indicating she is listening to him.



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JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

And, presumably, he is asking her to protect him as he makes his journey through the afterlife.

NARRATOR

As you enter the gallery with the large table in the center, you will find a stela on the right dedicated to a craftsman named Nakhi.

7. STELA OF NAKHI

NARRATOR:

Egyptian religious practices, especially regarding the afterlife, were very codified. The funerary stela assisted the spirit of the deceased on its journey. While the funerary stelae created for royalty exhibit a uniformity, those made by the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina for their own use vary. An example is the stela of Nakhi, dedicated to the deceased craftsman who bore that name. Julián Zugazagoitia.

JULIÁN ZUGAZAGOITIA:

In the different labor that they did, each of them contributing to make that their own would gain immortality and access to the afterlife through these stelae. So, I do feel that the craftsmanship and perhaps almost the detail has something more touching when I see them.

I think the depictions become much more personal in the offerings that are rendered, and I do believe these might be renderings that almost are like portraits of people that would be known to them and around their circle.

NARRATOR:

The top register of this stela shows Nakhi making an offering to the two main deities of the afterlife: Osiris, the god of the underworld, and the jackal-faced Anubis, the god of the dead, who guides the deceased in the afterlife. Both gods symbolize rebirth and resurrection. The middle register depicts Nakhi and his wife receiving offerings of food and drink (seen on the table in front of them) from their children, and the bottom register illustrates Nakhi's other children holding lotus blossoms, symbols of resurrection.



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8. DEIR EL-MEDINA INTRODUCTION

NARRATOR:

Julián Zugazagoitia.

JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

Deir el-Medina was a very important discovery in the archaeological world, because it showed the village that was constructed to house all of the people working to create both Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings. And it actually sits in between those two geographic concentrations of many important temples and pharaonic tombs. So, the fact that they mastered all of the arts that allowed for carving, to create these tombs, they were regarded and had a very special place.



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NARRATOR:

The discovery of Deir el-Medina in the late nineteenth century brought real insight into the lives of the laborers and families that lived there in ancient times. On the table display are all kinds of objects that were actually used on a daily basis. Some of the most fascinating are shards of limestone with painted sketches, called ostraca. The sketches depict figural scenes, animals, and architectural details.

JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

It is one of the great findings at Deir el-Medina, fragments of draft drawings that were perhaps captured very quickly. So, it gives you a sense, also, an intimacy into the process of creating . . . whether it's the stelas or the paintings of the wall in the tombs.

NARRATOR:

You will also see a variety of tools.

JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

The objects that I love in these cases is all of the instruments that they would have used to create these tombs; whether it's a draughtsman's stick to make sure that they would have straight lines, to the pigments that were found left intact.

This vitrine with the scripts palette, with the brushes, almost gives you the sense that you can touch it, and you can see the humanity that there is in these objects; the proximity of knowing that someone, many hundred years ago, used this to paint a tomb, to prepare to go to work.

NARRATOR:

In addition to the objects, Schiaparelli and his team also discovered documents inscribed on papyrus.



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On the table display is a fragment from a work journal, written on papyrus, that provides administrative details of the necropolis. It recounts how the work took place—from the number of laborers a pharaoh required, the tools provided by the state to the workers, and the compensation paid.

9. DEATH AND BURIAL IN DEIR EL-MEDINA

NARRATOR:

Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

We know that workmen in Deir el-Medina would use the free time they had also to build and develop their own tombs and tombs for other members of the village and to craft grave goods they needed to have as funerary goods in the tomb.

NARRATOR:

Shabtis were ritual objects placed in the tombs of all Egyptians, rich and poor alike. These small statuettes were shaped like the mummy of the deceased. In the afterlife, the shabti figures would perform all sorts of work on behalf of the dead.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

Shabtis are a very important feature of funerary religions in ancient Egypt. Shabti probably comes from the Egyptian verb *wesheb*, which means answer.

Because they are the ones who need to answer once the deceased is asked by Osiris in the hereafter to carry out some important tasks and duties.

NARRATOR:

Shabtis were believed to be animated by a spell contained in the *Book of the Dead*. Some burials only contained a few shabtis, while others contained hundreds. Shabtis could be made of stone, wood, or faience and were often depicted holding hoes and carrying baskets on their backs.

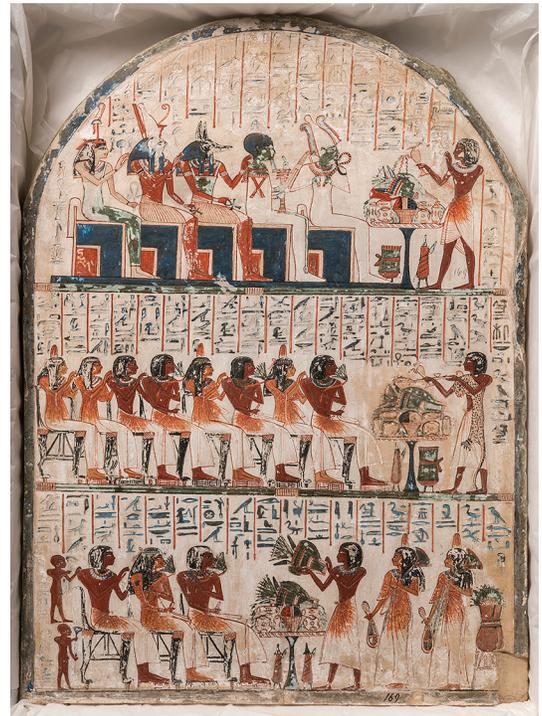
The laborers of Deir el-Medina also included stelae in their tombs. In the large free-standing wall case is a stela belonging to Kel.



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DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

We see him as deceased, pouring water in front of an offering table, and, on the other side of the offering table, there is the god, Osiris, the god of the hereafter. There is the god, Ptah, which is the main god and protector of the city of Memphis, represented in a mummiform shape, holding his knees and the *djed*-pillar. The djed-pillar is a symbol of stability. It's also interpreted as the backbone of the god Osiris, and from the djed-pillar there is also the sceptre vase coming out, meaning power and stability on Earth.



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10. EGYPTIAN FUNERARY BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

The Ancient Egyptians believed that there was an underworld, an eternal life, and rebirth of the soul. So, to ensure that they reached this spiritual paradise, Egyptians developed an elaborate set of funerary beliefs and practices. Most of these beliefs were associated with the myth of the god Osiris.

NARRATOR:

Osiris's younger brother, Seth, killed Osiris and dismembered him. Osiris's sisters, Nephthys and Isis, gathered his body parts and bound them together with strips of cloth—the first mummification—and brought him back to life. The reanimated Osiris then became the god of the underworld. Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

So, when a person died in Ancient Egypt, their body had to be carefully preserved through this process of mummification, just as the body of Osiris was. And the body would be placed inside a coffin, and the coffin was placed inside a tomb. And the tomb was filled with all the provisions that one would need in the afterlife.

NARRATOR:

Along with food, drink, clothing, and furniture—and the shabti figurines that would serve the deceased—there were other important items included to protect the mummy, seen in the case in the center of this gallery.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

This includes amulets and jewelry, masks, coffins, and a wooden headrest. This was used to support the base of the mummy's head inside the coffin. Just to kind of cradle the head and protect it and make sure that it wasn't separated from the body of the mummy.



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NARRATOR:

An amulet was often placed on the chest to protect the heart—here there is a large amulet in the shape of a beetle—a scarab.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

The scarab is symbolic of Khepri. And Khepri is the god of the rising sun. And when the sun rises, that is symbolic of the day starting again and of regeneration and rebirth.

And in the case here, we have several shabtis from the tomb of Seti I, who was the father of Ramesses II. And they are made out of faience. And we see that it's a beautiful turquoise-colored glaze that represents the water of the Nile; it represents fertility and, hence, also represents regeneration. But also, it represents the shining bright light of eternity.

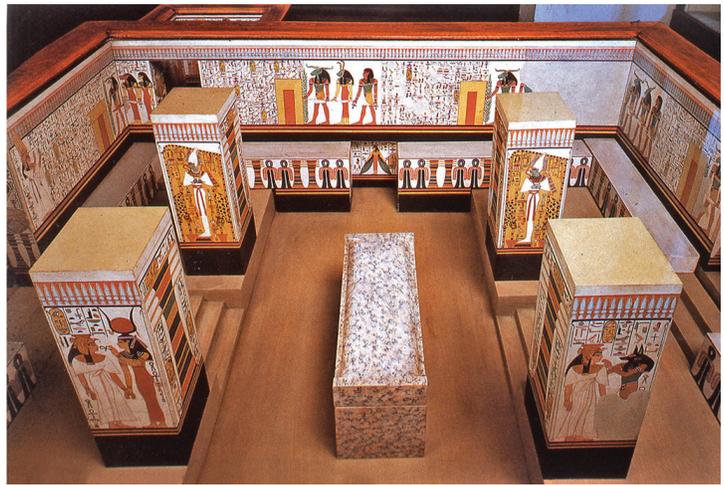


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11. QUEEN NEFERTARI'S TOMB MODEL

SCHIAPARELLI (ACTOR):

One day, one of the shrewdest rabeghi, or robbers, in the necropolis, called Califa, came to see me . . . The two of us climbed the mountain. He led me to the northern end of the valley . . . and there, beating the ground with his sih—the iron rod . . . used by rabeghi in search of tombs—and showing around the magnificent sheer cliffs: “This,” he said, “is a place of the Pharaohs.”



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I undertook, with a large team of workers, the systematic exploration of that area; and indeed, after only two days of work, we discovered the first rough steps of a steep staircase, and after a few steps, the entrance of a tomb that led into a sloping corridor, with crudely worked walls, which after a distance of about fifteen meters turned left and gave access to a room of a certain amplitude . . .

NARRATOR:

You hear the excitement in Ernesto Schiaparelli's own words when he discovered, in 1904, the tomb of Queen Nefertari, wife of Pharaoh Ramesses II. This model was made by members of his archaeological team. Julián Zugazagoitia.

JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

This wooden model is, for me, one of the most touching pieces, perhaps, in this exhibition, because of its exact depiction of how the tomb was when it was discovered in the early 1900s by the Italian Mission led by Schiaparelli. It has been said that it is like discovering the Sistine Chapel of tombs in the Valley of the Queens.

But the model brings something in our digital era that is so beautifully analog, the painstakingly details of the exact rendering in which each of the elements that you will find in this one-to-ten scale model are accurate.

NARRATOR:

The queen's sarcophagus was placed in the lower burial chamber of the tomb. In the center of this gallery, you see the shattered lid of her sarcophagus surrounded by four columns.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

And the columns are decorated with *djed*-pillars. And this is important because this *djed*-pillar represents the backbone of Osiris. And thus, it signifies stability. This chamber, symbolically, then represents the realm of Osiris, and this is where the Queen is supposed to rest before her rebirth.

12. QUEEN NEFERTARI'S TOMB

NARRATOR:

When Schiaparelli and his team entered the tomb of Queen Nefertari, they realized that it was a magnificent space, large in size, with intricate paintings on its walls and columns. They realized, too, that it had been almost completely looted soon after it was sealed. The tomb itself is still in the Valley of the Queens, of course—but nearly everything they found there is displayed in this gallery.



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The massive lid to the sarcophagus was damaged by grave robbers. Julián Zugazagoitia.

JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

You see the violence that it requires given the thickness of this. So, that just tells you also that strength, both to construct it, but it also it tells you about how the search for these tombs was something that, throughout antiquity it was going on, because they knew that there were treasures.

NARRATOR:

Also recovered was a set of mummified knees and a pair of woven sandals. Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

Based on the proportions of the bones of the knees, the experts estimate that they did belong to a woman. She was about 5' 5", 5' 6", and that actually makes her taller than about eighty-four percent of the women of her time. She had arteriosclerosis, so she was maybe about between 40 and 60 years old. We see that the knees were separated from the body during the tomb robbery.

JULIÁN ZUGAZGOITIA:

The sandals that you see here are, for me, the most moving object that was found in the tomb, because it's such a personal and such an intimate object that you see yourself being able to wear. So, it is this object that is a beautifully crafted sandal that has also survived hundreds of years. But if you see and compare it to the wall painting in which she's playing *senet*, and you see her wearing this very same type of sandals, it brings really the past into the present.

NARRATOR

A gold and bright blue djed-pillar amulet—located in the case diagonally opposite the sandals—was also found in the tomb. It is inscribed on the back with the name of Nefertari. It might have stood on one of the four so-called magic bricks, which were put on the four corners of the tomb to preserve the magical space, much in the way it is depicted with the pillars here. Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

One of the spells of the magical brick is to be set over a djed-pillar amulet of faience whose top has been covered with electrum, set firmly on an unbaked clay brick. So, this is probably part of the ritual to secure the magical space of the tomb, and it's very important that has been preserved.

NARRATOR:

The grave robbers who looted Queen Nefertari's tomb took away her coffin, which would have been lavishly decorated with spells, protective symbols, and deities of the underworld.

Please proceed to the final gallery of the exhibition, where you'll see a range of ancient coffins and learn more about the ritual texts that the Egyptians sent with their dead into the afterlife.

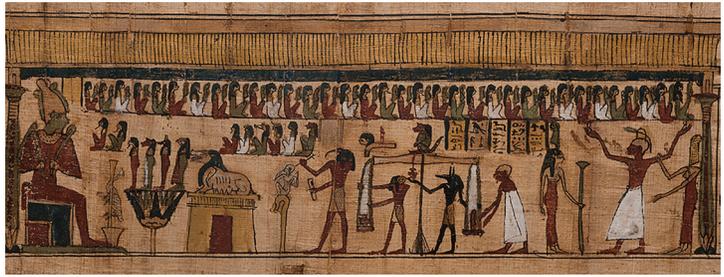


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13. EGYPTIAN FUNERARY TEXTS

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

For the Egyptians to aid the spirit of the dead on their journey through the underworld to reach Osiris, there were several types of funerary books.



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NARRATOR:

These were a collection of spells and incantations, often written on papyrus, that would help the deceased navigate threats and overcome the obstacles on the long and perilous journey.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

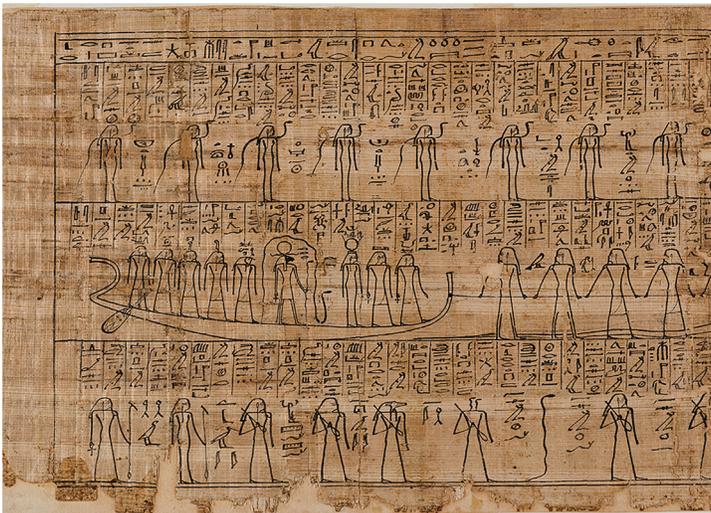
Many of them have wonderful, colorful illustrations. Normally, it's a combination of both imagery and a hieroglyphic text, so that the things that you cannot express in words, you can express in images and vice versa.

NARRATOR:

One example is the *Book of the Dead of Hor*, the longer of the two papyri displayed here. It recounts how the spirit of the deceased, in order to reach the afterlife, must navigate halls and tests in the underworld. One of the most important trials involves Ma'at, goddess of justice, weighing the heart of the deceased—representing their deeds on earth—against a feather. If it is lighter than the feather, the deceased passes on to be with Osiris. If not, they are immediately devoured by a ferocious monster. Once the spirit has passed through all the tests and halls, it is reunited with the physical body.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

The *Book of the Dead* has about 200 spells, or chapters. It's probably the most well-known Egyptian funerary text. But there's other texts and these are known collectively as the Books of the Underworld.



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NARRATOR

The *Book of Amduat* is another of the funerary texts and is also on display here. It describes the nightly journey of the sun god Ra through the underworld.

14. INSIDE EGYPTIAN TOMBS

NARRATOR:

The coffins on display in this gallery come from two royal tombs that Ernesto Schiaparelli also discovered in the Valley of Queens. The tombs were constructed just after Queen Nefertari's time, but the coffins found in them were from hundreds of years later. This tells us that the tombs had been reused. Dr. Christian Greco.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

At that time, people do not have the economic means to build new tombs, so probably they reused tombs of previous generations because they were sacred spaces, because there were texts written on the tombs that could accompany the deceased in their journey in the hereafter, and that it could assure them that when they were in front of Osiris, they could go through the trial and go further and live forever in the Fields of Aaru.

NARRATOR:

Egyptians believed that when you die your spirit departs—leaving behind just the body itself, a corpse. The corpse must then be prepared to be reunited with the spirit. Jennifer Casler Price.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

So, in order to preserve the body, the Egyptians developed a process of mummification of the body and its remains. It involved washing the body, purifying the body, drying the body, taking all of the internal organs out of the body and preserving them. And, all in all, this would take about seventy days to complete.

And after you've dried the body, put the organs back in, and then you wrap the body up, and then that body is placed into a coffin. And oftentimes there are several coffins. Presumably all to protect the body in the afterlife, so that it can be reunited with the spirit.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

And when the day of the funeral arrives, there is a procession of family and friends as we see represented in registers in the tombs. They can express their pain and their grief.

Once the coffin arrives in front of the tomb, the coffin is raised vertically, and the sem priest perform the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth. The deceased has to have his nose and mouth open again so that he can breathe and eat in the hereafter, and his life can be carried on.



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NARRATOR

Several of the covers for the coffins that you see here have the image of a woman with outstretched wings. This is the sky goddess Nut, who protects the deceased in the afterlife.

Images of Anubis, the embalming god, portrayed with a black jackal head, are also present. Black was a powerfully symbolic choice. On the one hand, it could be the color of decomposition, but, at the same time, it is the color of the rich and fertile mud of the Nile and is a positive symbol of regeneration.

JENNIFER CASLER PRICE:

I encourage you to go around and look at these coffins and, specifically, to see how beautifully they're painted. All of the iconographic imagery that we see—some of it that we saw depicted on the murals in Nefertari's tomb—but now, this has been transferred to the surface of the mummy's coffin.

NARRATOR:

Egyptians were madly in love with life. They studied the world around them from nature to the mechanics of the sun and stars. This appreciation and respect for life led them to create elaborate rituals for when death inevitably arrived.

DR. CHRISTIAN GRECO:

Death was not the end. Death was the new beginning. And after death you would encounter a world which was very similar to Egypt but without injustice, without chaos, where Ma'at, where justice could reign, but in order to achieve it, you had to prepare yourself. You had to save money and be able to pay the artist to make your coffins, to make the *Book of the Dead*, to decorate your tomb, and to find all the means to be guaranteed that this would happen, but also it was very important to leave a remembrance of your name, because only if the name was remembered you could really live forever.



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