

# WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN



DIANA CRAIG PATCH AND NIV ALLON

GALLERY 132

EGYPTIAN ART FACSIMILE ROTATION 2016–2017

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# Preface

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The small installation presented in the following catalogue explores the depiction of Egyptians and non-Egyptians in different socially and politically motivated scenes, including those involving kingship, funerals, trade, and subsistence activities. The accompanying texts reflect the gallery panel and labels at the time of the exhibition. In order to view each facsimile's record on The Met's website, click on the image in the catalogue.

All objects in this catalogue are part of the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Unless otherwise indicated, additional illustrations are from The Metropolitan Museum of Art Department of Egyptian Art Archives.

The gallery rotation was made possible by the generosity of the Friends of Egyptian Art.

# Views of the Installation in Gallery 132



# CATALOGUE

# Walk Like an Egyptian

Today, people are forced from their homes in record numbers as a result of hunger, intolerance, and war. Refugees and immigrants often settle in distant places among cultures different from their own. As communities open their borders to the displaced, they in turn contemplate their own customs and traditions. More than four thousand years ago in ancient Egypt, the need to define and maintain identity was as relevant as it is today.

The Nile River flows through a long and tightly circumscribed valley. It gave rise to a population that was varied genetically but largely unified culturally. As a result of trade, conquest, and immigration, Egypt's exposure to foreigners especially increased during the Late Middle and New Kingdoms (ca. 1800–1070 B.C.). As ancient Egyptians came into contact with different cultures, their art began to address the concepts of identity, ethnicity, and difference through posture, dress, skin color, and inscriptions.

However, many symbols used to differentiate identity often held layers of meaning, and a scene's context can be crucial in interpreting its significance. Foreigners depicted in art could point to the dangerous world outside Egypt, though they could also be seen as peaceful visitors. In many cases, skin color signaled ethnicity but in others it had symbolic meaning. Furthermore, foreigners residing in Egypt often depicted themselves with Egyptian characteristics and are therefore identifiable as foreign only by their names. As in much of life, artistic decisions could be flexible or ambiguous.



Map showing key foreign lands with whom Egypt came in contact in the New Kingdom



The facsimiles on view in this gallery largely highlight how New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 B.C.) Egyptians typically represented themselves and people from foreign lands.

A scene from the tomb of Huy, the Viceroy of Kush for Tutankhamun (ca. 1353–1327 B.C.), showing Nubians with diverse characteristics; note the Egyptians are at the back following Nubian of the elite (Facsimile painted in 1923–27 by Charles K. Wilkinson; Rogers Fund, 1930; 30.4. 21)

# An Upper-Class Man and Woman Shown in a Typical Scene



Here, a woman embraces her son in front of an offering table, illustrating both a typical scene and pose. In ancient Egyptian art, the elite are shown in their best dress, regardless of whether they are in the marshes or at a banquet. Though details of dress and hair could vary, skin color is reliably uniform in such scenes: men typically are shown with deep red skin, the color of an Egyptian who

spent time outdoors in the central Nile Valley, while women, who did not work outside, are depicted with yellow skin.

The consistency of these characteristics suggests that Egyptians used such qualities to identify themselves as people of the Nile Valley between the Mediterranean Sea and the First Cataract.

## Facsimile painted in 1907–8 by Norman de Garis Davies

Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.5.8)

### Original:

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep II (ca. 1427–1400 B.C.)

Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Djehuty, later usurped by Djehutyemhab (TT 45)

# Workmen Preparing Fish and Making a Net



In contrast with images of well-groomed and fully clothed upper-class men, workmen usually appear with simple but varied hairstyles and little or no clothing. The scene here shows four such men carrying fish and a fifth preparing nets. One of the men pours out his rich catch, which will be gutted for food, before a

figure which for an unknown reason has been intentionally damaged. The flowering papyrus plant to the right locates the figures and their activity in a marsh, where workmen are often depicted wearing nothing more than a strap around the waist, as seen here.

**Facsimile painted in 1926 by Nina or Norman de Garis Davies**

Rogers Fund, 1915 (30.4.50)

**Original:**

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (ca. 1479–1458 B.C.)  
Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Amenhotep (TT 73)



# Traditional Depiction of Enemies from Foreign Lands



Foreigners are easily recognized in Egyptian art through their hairstyles, costumes, and complexions, all of which differ from the traditional representation of Egyptians. Here, nine figures beneath a throne feature their own distinctive characteristics. The Babylonian at the front wears a colorful garment, a long beard, and elaborate curls of hair, while the

Libyan (third from the left) wears a garment with a zigzag pattern and two feathers in his hair. Other figures hail from Mitanni, Crete, and various areas in Nubia. All are bound and kneeling beneath the king's feet, a sign of his universal dominance and their complete subjugation.

**Facsimile painted in 1931 by Nina de Garis Davies**

Rogers Fund, 1933 (33.8.8)

**Original:**

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390–1352 B.C.)  
Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Anen (TT 120)

# Nubians Seated on a Cargo Boat



At the time this scene was painted, Nubia was essentially an Egyptian colony, and some local inhabitants served in its administration. The men seated on top of this ship are characterized as Nubians by the color of their skin, their hairstyle, and the single feathers on their heads. They are part of a larger scene of Nubians bringing tribute to the viceroy of Kush, the highest official in the Egyptian administration that controlled Nubia. This scene and other representations in this tomb

show a wider diversity of hair, complexion, and ornaments—the array of costumes and styles may relate to the viceroy’s personal understanding of the local population’s diversity.

This facsimile is a detail from a larger scene on view in Gallery 135 and another detail may be found on the panel introducing this exhibition.

## Facsimile painted in 1922–23 by Charles K. Wilkinson

Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.20)

### Original:

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Akhenaten– Tutankhamun (ca. 1352–1327 B.C.)  
Thebes, Qurnet Murai, Tomb of Amenhotep Huy (TT 40)

# Foreigners Delivering Tribute to Egypt



Another role typically ascribed to foreigners involved the delivery of tribute, goods brought to the Pharaoh from lands he conquered or manipulated through influence. In such scenes, foreigners are distinguished from one another by complexion, hair-style, and dress, as well as the goods they carry, such as precious vessels and exotic animals. The facsimiles here (from left to right) depict Nubians, men from Aegean islands, with their long hair, and men with dark red-purple skin from lands along the Red Sea.

## Facsimiles painted in 1925-26 by Nina de Garis Davies

Rogers Fund, 1931 (31.6.40, .42)

### Originals:

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II (ca. 1479–1400 B.C.)  
Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100)

## Facsimile painted in 1914–16 by Hugh R. Hopgood

Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.14)

### Original:

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (ca. 1479–1458 B.C.)  
Thebes, el-Khoka, Tomb of Puyemre (TT 39)

# Leaders of the Aamu: Friend or Foe?



Men of Southwest Asia (see map) appear in Egyptian art wearing colorful garments, mushroom-shaped hairstyles and full beards. This illustration might reflect a simple trade scene or the waves of Asiatic immigrants arriving around this time in Egypt.

However, because these men are shown with desert animals, it is possible the scene may have a subtle symbolic meaning. The vanquishing of foreigners and the hunting of

desert animals in art symbolized the overcoming of chaos by order. The depiction of the civil foreigner and the tamed desert animal may thus hint at this concept. In contrast to the scene's lack of hostility, the inscription above them represents the foreigners subdued with their hands tied behind their backs, echoing the manner in which enemies are typically represented.

**Facsimile painted in 1931 by Norman de Garis Davies**

Rogers Fund, 1933 (33.8.17)

**Original:**

Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, reign of Senwosret II (ca. 1887–1878 B.C.)  
Beni Hasan, Tomb of Khnumhotep II (BH 3)

## Military Musicians Showing Nubian and Egyptian Styles



The figures in this scene are marked by an ambiguous ethnicity, as they exhibit both Egyptian and Nubian attributes. Their reddish skin color, wrapped kilts over pointed aprons, and wigs are typical Egyptian characteristics, but the feathers and the last figure's curly hair are identifiably Nubian. It has

been suggested that the feathers were part of military attire, though no military men in this tomb are adorned with the accessory. This ability to draw on both styles may reflect the lower social status of these figures, who were not part of the elite.

**Facsimile painted in 1930–31 by Nina de Garis Davies**

Rogers Fund, 1931 (31.6.3)

**Original:**

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Thutmose IV (ca. 1400–1390 B.C.)

Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Tjeneny (TT 74)

# Egyptian Workmen Gathering Papyrus



In ancient Egyptian art, workmen are often depicted nude and bald. Such features have been traditionally understood as markers of ethnicity, and the workmen as prisoners of war, who were forced to carry out menial tasks. Today's scholars, however, interpret their bald hairstyle, clothing, and unkempt facial hair as

indicators of their age and lower social status. In contrast to their corpulent bodies and their stubble—like that on the cheeks of the man in the nearby fishing and netting scene—elite men are often shown young, clean-shaven, and meticulously adorned.

**Facsimile painted in 1914–16 by Hugh R. Hopgood**

Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.11)

**Original:**

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (ca. 1479–1458 B.C.)  
Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Puyemre (TT 39)

# A Scene Depicting the King's Wife Aashyt



Here, an elegant Aashyt receives offerings from her staff. This queen, along with nineteen other women, were buried within King Mentuhotep II's funerary complex. The burials suggest these women may have played a role in the king's rebirth into the afterlife. So Aashyt may have been shown here with dark skin rather than the traditional yellow skin seen elsewhere because the color black symbolized rebirth.

Alternatively, her dark skin and that of some of her staff may be because the family of Mentuhotep II most likely came from Upper Egypt where darker skin tones were common. Mentuhotep II's reign marked a new beginning in Egyptian culture and was a time of innovation and experimentation in art, which may explain why this scene differs from later and more traditional representations of the royal family.

## Facsimile painted in 1926 by Charles K. Wilkinson

Rogers Fund, 1948 (48.105.32)

### Original:

First Intermediate Period–Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 11, reign of Mentuhotep II (ca. 2051–2030 B.C.)  
Thebes, Deir el-Bahri, tomb of Aashyt; Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 47267

# Green Skinned Osiris



Black or green skin tones in ancient Egyptian art hold religious significance. In this scene, Osiris, the ruler of the underworld who is accompanied by three minor deities, is bright green, a color associated with fertility,

regeneration, and birth. Because Osiris is responsible for the successful transition of the dead from this life into the afterlife, his green skin here is apt.

**Facsimile painted in 1915 by Hugh R. Hopgood and possibly Nina de Garis Davies**

Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.157)

**Original:**

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep III– Akhenaten (ca. 1390–1349 B.C.)  
Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky (TT 181)



# Black Statue of Thutmose I



Thutmose I is represented here as a statue, indicated by the men pulling him on a sledge. His black skin was initially understood to represent the ebony wood from which the statue was possibly made, though it most likely relates to the king's deified state. Cults were established to worship kings during their reign. The cult of Thutmose I persisted for

centuries after his death, a rare phenomenon, and this statue of the king is at the center of a scene depicting offerings and rites honoring him. Royal figures are sometimes depicted with a dark complexion, as the color black represents rebirth and regeneration—like the black soil of the Nile Valley.

**Facsimile painted in 1911 by Norman de Garis Davies**

Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.5.17a)

**Original:**

New Kingdom, Dynasty 19, reign of Seti I (ca. 1294–1279 B.C.)  
Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Tomb of Userhat (TT 51)

