

# EGYPTIAN ART

**Geographic isolation:**

civilization is defendable, homogeneous culture = continuous traditions

**Economic security:**

agricultural base due to inundation of the Nile = prosperity, continuity

**Deeply held religious beliefs:**

Pharaoh son of god, hierarchical society = stability/aversion to change

**Hierarchical society:**

Pharaoh top of "pyramid" = collective will/aversion to change

**Geological substructure:**

plethora of stone = megalithic architecture, permanence

**Belief in the Afterlife:**

elaborate funereal traditions, objects and tomb architecture



What is the **FUNCTION** of this art work?

Gardner's Art through the Ages: A Concise Global History

STOKSTAD, 5th Edition, Chapter 5, pages 49 - 79

## CONTEXT

**Artistic traditions** focused on **representing royal figures and divinities** and on the function of funerary and palatial complexes. Works of art illustrate the **active exchange of ideas** and artistic styles among the Mediterranean cultures and **influences on the classical world**. The art of **dynastic Egypt** (present day Egypt and Sudan from 3000 to 30 BCE) includes **pre-dynastic Egypt and Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms**. The Amarna period (New Kingdom) was important because of its **cultural reform** and **stylistic revolution**. **Artistic innovations** and **conventions** (canons) provides a foundation for subsequent artistic traditions within the region and beyond.

- The **art of dynastic Egypt embodied a sense of permanence**. It was **created for eternity** and **focused on preserving a cycle of rebirth**. The culture represents an elaborate funerary **sect** whose devotees created **ka statues** to house the spirit after death, **artifacts, decorations, and furnishings for tombs**. Egyptian art incorporated mythological and religious symbolism often centered on the cult of the sun.

- **Development of monumental stone architecture** culminated with the pyramids and **innovative designs** for rock-cut tombs and pylon temples, each **demonstrating the importance of the pharaoh** - a god-king with absolute power, descended directly from the sun god. The **Egyptian architectural construction of the clerestory** is important for the history of architecture.

- **Representations of humans** made clear **distinctions between deified pharaohs and lower classes**, using hierarchical proportion and idealization versus naturalism. The **artistic canon** of dynastic Egypt, with strict conventions of representation, use of materials, and treatment of forms, was followed for centuries with only short-lived periods of experimentation and deviation.

## ARTWORKS

### APAH 250 Images:

- 13. Palette of King Narmer
- 15. Seated scribe
- 17. Great Pyramids and Sphinx  
-plan
- 18. King Menkaura and Queen
- 20. Temple of Amun Re at Karnak  
-plan  
-Hypostyle hall
- 21. Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut  
-Kneeling statue
- 22. Akenaton, Nefertiti, and three daughters
- 23. Tutankhamun's tomb, innermost coffin
- 24. Last Judgement of Hu-Nefer,  
Book of the Dead

### Additional Images:

- Seated Ka Statue of Khafre
- Temple of Ramses II
- Statue of Akenaton

## TIMELINE/MAJOR CIVILIZATIONS

OLD KINGDOM: 2500 - 2150 BCE

MIDDLE KINGDOM: 2030 - 1640 BCE

NEW KINGDOM: 1550 - 1178 z

## VOCABULARY

hieroglyphics	sphinx	atlantids
mastaba	diorite	causeway
ben-ben	colonnades	engaged columns
mortuary temple	clerestory	entablature
hypostyle (hall)	pylon	ka
canon	hierachal	