

Ancient Egyptian Art and Architecture

A Very Short Introduction

By Christina Riggs

Questions for thought and discussion

- What does a phrase like ‘ancient Egypt’ or ‘Egyptian art’ bring to your mind?
- Where have you seen works of art from ancient Egypt, or else inspired by ancient Egypt?
- What makes ancient Egyptian art and architecture look ‘Egyptian’?
- Why have ancient Egyptian art and architecture been side-lined or overlooked in many histories of art?
- How did Egyptian antiquities, and even entire buildings or parts of buildings, come to populate the cities and museums of Europe and North America?
- How many languages are written on the Rosetta Stone - and why are all of them significant?
- What kinds of Egyptian antiquities can you see in a museum near you, or on a favourite museum website? Can you spot similarities in style, materials, or use?
- Does the religious function of many Egyptian antiquities (including mummies!) mean that they shouldn’t be considered as works of art?
- Why can we identify so few ancient Egyptian artists or architects by name?
- What raw materials were used to make ancient Egyptian objects and buildings?
- Why was the king (or pharaoh) so important in ancient Egyptian art and architecture?
- Does ancient Egyptian art tell us anything about ‘normal’ people, or only a small elite?
- In what ways does ancient Egyptian art deal with sex and fertility?
- Did art and architecture change when Egypt came under first Greek, then Roman rule?
- Over the past two centuries, what economic and political factors have influenced interest in ancient Egypt – from the Napoleonic expedition to the sculptures of Mahmoud Mukhtar?
- What do you think Fred Wilson’s *Grey Area* (see Fig. 22) is saying about debates surrounding the racial identity of the ancient Egyptians?

Other books by the Author

Unwrapping Ancient Egypt (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art, Identity, Funerary Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Further reading

Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008, revised edition)

Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Ian Shaw, *Ancient Egypt: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Penelope Wilson, *Hieroglyphs: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)