



Inlay in the form of a human mask

On display

Title/Description: Inlay in the form of a human mask

Born: 0350 c. BC

Object Type: Mask

Materials: Feldspar

Measurements: h. 25 x w. 30 x d. 5 mm

Accession Number: 307

Historic Period: Late Period (c. 350 BC), 4th century BC

Production Place: Africa, Egypt

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The inlay most probably represents the *hr*-face in hieroglyphic inscriptions. The eyes have been cut out and the brows incised to take insets of a different material, probably glass. The right ear is damaged. The sign would have been completed by separate hair of different material. The scalloped configuration of the top edge conforms to the contours of the hair in the *hr*-sign. No exact parallel for such a specimen seems to exist, though inlaid hieroglyphs of this quality are known from royal coffins of Dynasty XVIII, and from the reigns of the last native Egyptian kings (Dynasty XXX), to which latter period this piece has been assigned.

Stone and glass inlays in the form of hieroglyphic signs were a luxurious substitute for funerary texts, which on less expensive objects, usually coffins, would be carved or simply painted. The *hr* sign in Egyptian means face and sight, as well as serving as a preposition meaning at, in, upon, etc. For a good example of the use of fine inlays on a coffin, see Yoyotte (1968: 206), and for an overview of various inlays, see Cooney (1976: 73-88).

Cyril Aldred & Geoffrey T. Martin, 1997

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Formerly in the possession of Captain K. A. Webster.

Gift from K. J. Hewett to Lisa Sainsbury in 1952.

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
