

# BULLETIN OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

VOLUME LII

BOSTON, DECEMBER, 1954

NO. 290



54.1044. Hans Burgkmair, *The Virgin and Child* (Woodcut) Otis Norcross Fund  
See Page 96

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

SUBSCRIPTION ONE DOLLAR

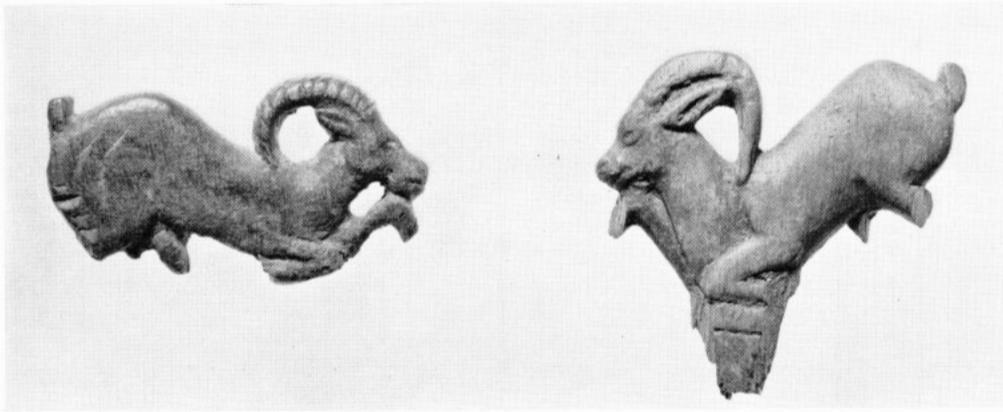


Fig. 1. Two New Kingdom Wooden Comb Ornaments  
Gift of Miss Mary S. Ames

### FIVE SMALL EGYPTIAN WORKS OF ART

THE Department of Egyptian Art has recently acquired two small but fascinating pieces of sculpture, an ivory woman carrying a child on her back<sup>1</sup> and a lapis lazuli hawk with gold and copper fittings.<sup>2</sup> With these it seemed appropriate to include three delightful little objects which have not been published and which have recently been placed on exhibition in the New Kingdom Gallery. Two of these are in the form of a

<sup>1</sup> Acc. No. 54.994: Gift of the Class of the Museum of Fine Arts (Mrs. Arthur L. Devens, Chairman). Height 5.7 cm.

<sup>2</sup> Acc. No. 54.934: Otis Norcross Fund. Height 7.7 cm.

kneeling antelope which decorated the top of a wooden comb,<sup>3</sup> while the third<sup>4</sup> comes from a more important monument, being part of the wall decoration of the tomb of one of the courtiers of Amenhotep III who lived about 1400 B.C.

All of these are incontestably fine examples of Egyptian craftsmanship but they present something of a problem in identification since it is not known where they were found. The

<sup>3</sup> Acc. No. 11.1508. Length 5.2 cm. Acc. No. 11.1509 Length 5.4 cm. Both: Gift of Miss Mary S. Ames.

<sup>4</sup> Acc. No. 11.1523: Gift of Miss Mary S. Ames. Width 18.7 cm.



Fig. 2. Relief with soldiers from a tomb of the time of Amenhotep III  
Gift of Miss Mary S. Ames



Fig. 3. X-ray photograph of hawk, showing gold wire inserted in head and pin holding rosette on tail



Fig. 4. Lapis lazuli hawk  
Otis Norcross Fund

ivory figurine is perhaps the most difficult to date while the little wooden antelopes are the easiest. Complete wooden combs are known which show this happy use of animal forms that often decorated toilet articles in the New Kingdom. In our case the teeth of both combs have been broken away, leaving only the upper part of the frame of the comb under the animal on the right of Fig. 1. The excellence of the carving suggests that these may have been made in the 18th Dynasty around 1400 B.C. when this sort of decorative work was at its height.

The attractive piece of limestone relief (Fig. 2) shows the bowing figures of soldiers with shields slung over their shoulders and their arms raised in deference to the king who must have been seated on a throne to the right. The style of the relief, and particularly the drawing of the faces, is that of the reign of Amenhotep III. Several of this king's chief courtiers cut their tombs at the foot of the Qurna hill in the Theban Necropolis where the rock was sound enough for the carving of reliefs in place of the usual paintings on plaster laid over the friable stone of the upper part of the hill. In five tombs sculptured in this style, four (Nos. 47, 48, 56,

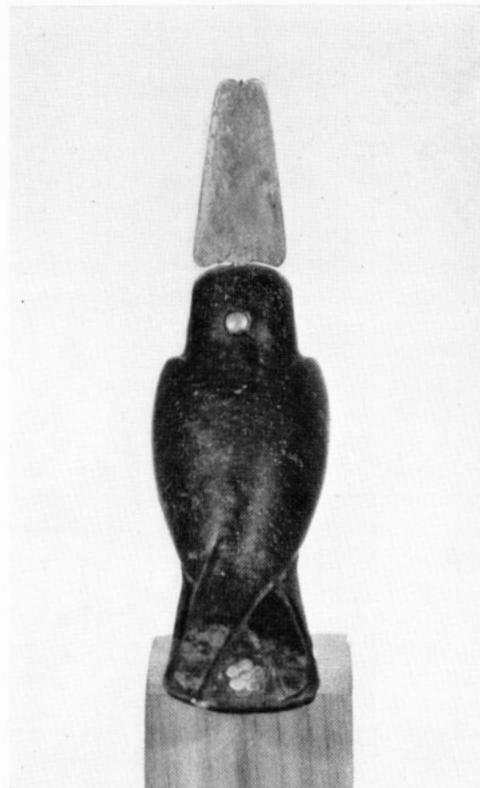


Fig. 5. Hawk seen from the back



Fig. 6. Middle Kingdom ivory figurine



Fig. 7. Child held in fold of robe on ivory figurine

Gift of the Class of the Museum of Fine Arts  
(Mrs. Arthur S. Devens, Chairman)

192) show Amenhotep III enthroned, receiving his courtiers or celebrating his jubilee, while in the fifth (No. 55) his place is taken by his son Amenhotep IV. Only the badly damaged tomb of Amenemhet called Surer, the Chief Steward of Amenhotep III, has a broken wall which could have contained our fragment showing the king's bodyguard. Whether or not our relief comes from the tomb of Surer (No. 48), we are fortunate in being able to exhibit a characteristic piece of this period. The curving lines and delicacy of the carving reflect the luxurious taste of what was perhaps Egypt's most magnificent reign.

The lapis lazuli hawk (Figs. 3-5) is a beautiful cult object representing the God Horus. It was fashioned with amazing technical virtuosity. The X-ray photograph (Fig. 3) made by Mr. Young in the Museum's Research Laboratory shows a curved boring running down from the top of the hawk's head and coming out at the back of the neck. Mr. Young thinks that originally the gold wire formed a tang at the base of the plumed headdress which was to extend through the boring to be riveted at the back, but that this was broken before it could be inserted. The craftsman then reversed the wire and forced it through from the back to wedge in place the lower end of the plumes. He covered the broken end of the wire with a small gold

plug on the back of the neck. It is hard to see how he can have made the curved boring into which the gold wire fits so snugly. The gold eyes were made separately and inserted, while a gold rosette on a pin was set between the tail feathers (Figs. 3, 5). The legs and feet were of copper and the right leg and claw have been lost. The essential features of the bird are superbly simplified in the crisp cutting of the lapis lazuli. The shining surface of the metal fittings brings out the golden flecks in the stone to produce a rich effect. The gold rosette is an unusual feature that produces an exotic impression which has something foreign about it. The hawk belongs to a late period in Egyptian art and has been called Ptolemaic, but may well be earlier. One wonders if it could have been made during the period of Persian domination, perhaps as early as the Fifth Century B.C.

The ivory figure of a woman is virtually unique (Figs. 6-7). She catches a heavy, patterned robe around her body and in it holds a child against her back, the tiny head of the infant protruding above the border of the robe which falls low between the woman's shoulder blades. The hands which held the robe in front were made of separate pieces pegged in and are now lost. The legs and feet are also missing. The face is well preserved and vitally alive. The rather

harshly accented features resemble those of the Cheops seated ivory figure in Cairo but this is probably due to an attempt to model the face clearly on such a small scale rather than that our ivory could also belong to Dynasty IV. A peculiar flat headdress has a hole bored in the middle of the top, the exact purpose of which is difficult to imagine.

The figurine does not resemble the little ivory women carrying children which are dated rather vaguely to Early Dynastic times.<sup>5</sup> Another in faience has been somewhat doubtfully assigned to the Saite Period.<sup>6</sup> In this case the woman seems to carry the child in a basket on her back as do some of the foreign women with children represented in

<sup>5</sup> Drawings and references to these appear on p. 3 of my *History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom*.

<sup>6</sup> Guy Brunton, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, 39 (1939), p. 102.

paintings of the Middle and New Kingdoms. We know of other cases where the child sits on the shoulder or is held against the hip. The only example where it is certainly held in a fold of the robe on the back is in a small wooden statuette in Edinburgh,<sup>7</sup> where the headdress of the woman also somewhat resembles ours. The Edinburgh statuette was excavated in a Middle Kingdom tomb at Beni Hasan and is evidently a foreign woman as one would suppose ours to be. One is, therefore, tempted to assign a date of about 1900 B.C. to the new ivory. Whether or not this plausible attribution to the XIIth Dynasty is correct, we have a delightful new addition to the exceedingly rare group of fine ivories.

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

<sup>7</sup> Cyril Aldred, *Middle Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt*, p. 42 (No. 30) and plate.

## A BASKET BY DANIEL CHRISTIAN FUETER

A LARGE silver basket of New York origin and ownership has been acquired from the Decorative Arts Special Fund. It was made by Daniel Christian Fueter who is recorded as entering his mark in the London guild-hall on December 8, 1753. Sir Ambrose Heal in his *London Goldsmiths* lists him as "silversmith; Man in the Moon, King's Road, Chelsea, 1753 — (emigrated to America) c. 1760." Yet in the *New York Gazette* of May 27, 1754 appeared "Daniel Fueter, Gold and Silver-Smith, Lately arrived in the *Snow Irene*, . . . makes all sorts of Gold and Silver work, after the newest and neatest Fashion; . . ." Although the craftsman's advertisements in the new world do not use his middle name, his marks show three initials and, for his American pieces, the city of his adoption, "N: York", in two lines. Thus he marked the basket which in his day was termed a "bread basket" though its rich decoration suggests a less prosaic use. The everted rim is bordered with grapes and their vines in a delicacy not

achieved in the next century's emulation of the design. The sides are so intricately pierced as to have necessitated considerable

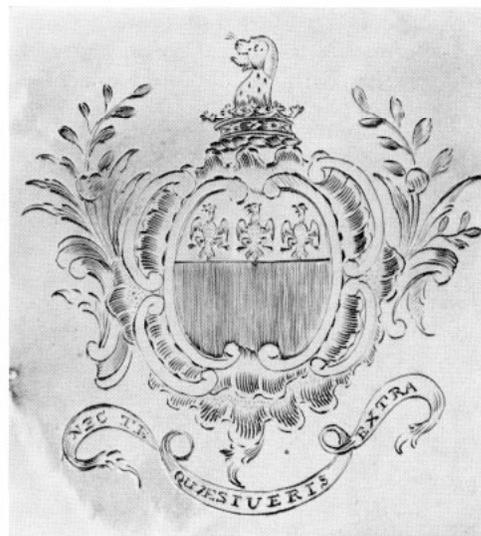


Fig. 1. Detail of Silver Basket