Working With Stylized Images

Egyptian Art

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When you think of ancient Egypt, what words come to your mind? Do you think of mummies, or pyramids, or the Great Sphinx? Why did the ancient Egyptians turn dead bodies into mummies? Why did they build enormous pyramids in the desert? Why did so many of their gods (like the one on the cover) have animal heads? And why were the Egyptians so preoccupied with death?

Even to the ancient Greeks and Romans, Egypt was an old land. Long before the Greeks built temples and theaters or the Romans constructed huge structures like the Colosseum, the Egyptians had developed a rich and complex civilization. The early Egyptians settled beside the fertile Nile River in northern Africa sometime before 3000 B.C. Over the years they formed a central government, developed a language, built vast monuments and created great works of art.

Egyptian civilization went on for thousands of years until Egypt was conquered by the Romans around 300 B.C. The pyramids and ruined temples remained, but no one knew much about the ancient Egyptians. They had left a wealth of written documents. But no one was able to read their Hieroglyphics (Hi-row-GLIF-iks). You can see examples of this picture-based writing system on the mummy case on the right. It wasn't until the early 1800s that the code was broken. Today, we know more about the ancient Egyptians than anyone has known since their civilization died out.

The Egyptians lived in the middle of a hostile desert. They depended on the Nile to provide them with rich harvests. They believed that their

Ra, the god of creation and the sun, had a falcon's head and wore the solar orb.
The Great Sphinx, an enormous sculpture carved out of rock more than 4500 years ago, has the head of a man and the body of a lion.

Great Sphinx, Giza, Old Kingdom, 4th dynasty. Photo, Art Resource.

Prosperity continued only because of their active relationship with their gods. Every natural event was related to a god. They believed the world began with the sun god Ra, who journeyed across the sky every day and under the earth every night. Egyptians associated animals and their amazing physical powers with the gods. The falcon, which flies to great heights and sees long distances stood for Ra (left). Anubis (cover), god of the dead, had a long, sharp, dark jackal's head. Sobek, the river god, was a powerful crocodile. Thoth, god of wisdom, had the head of a bird or a monkey. Nekhbet, goddess of protection, had a vulture's head. These figures were very significant to the Egyptians; they appeared in most pieces of writing and art. You can see on the mummy case (right) how their figures were stylized and reduced to their most basic shape.

How many different kinds of animals can you find in the mummy case on the right?

Life on Earth

“Enjoy yourself while you live. Put on fine linen, anoint yourself with wonderful perfumes, and wear beautiful jewels.”
—Egyptian song

Left, Hathor, goddess of daily life, wore cow’s horns and a solar orb. Hathor was associated with music and dance.

Although best remembered for tombs, pyramids, and mummies, the ancient Egyptians weren't always thinking about death. They liked many of the same things we enjoy today. From the paintings, sculptures, and objects they left, we know they liked to socialize. They liked large banquets, good food, storytelling, and music—played on flutes, lyres, harps. They were especially fond of board games. Young people enjoyed dancing. To cool off after sports or dancing, they would go swimming.

Both men and women were very concerned with their appearance. While exploring Egyptian tombs, archaeologists have found ancient makeup kits, razors, skin creams, and mirrors. The Egyptians usually wore simple, light clothing, but for formal occasions, both women and men wore elaborate jewelry, wigs, and perfume. Men had short hair or shaved heads; women wore nail polish and a great deal of makeup, especially around the eyes. Pharaohs (FAIR-ohs), or kings, wore false beards as a sign of power.

The Egyptians made what we think of as "art" for very different reasons than we do today. They didn't create paintings or sculptures to express themselves. Their creations were not meant to represent the present or to record the past. Images were made either for practical use, for communication, or for religious purposes. In Egyptian art, the figures are always eternally young and ideal. Nature is always lush and perfect.

Most Egyptian art is very stylized. Nearly every object and figure had a symbolic meaning. In order to make each image immediately recognizable, its shape was simplified. The visual quality that identified it—sharp snout, long, thin neck, curved beak—was exaggerated. Painted figures (like that of Hathor, opposite page, below) were usually made up of separate parts seen from their most recognizable viewpoints. Hathor's head and legs are seen from the side; her eye and shoulders are seen from the front. Jewelry and sculpture were also highly stylized. The round, solid, colorful shapes of the monkeys and scarab in the necklace (right) contrast with the thin, linear rectangles that make up the chain. The wings of the vulture in the piece on the left, curve around the neck and are made up of stylized, angular, repeat patterns that suggest feathers.

Thoth, the god of knowledge and writing, sometimes took the form of a baboon.

Necklace with monkeys. 18th dynasty. Photo, Art Resource.

The cones on the heads of the women above contained perfume which took several hours to melt.

Banquet scene. Dra Abu-el-Naga, Thebes, 18th dynasty.
Into the

"I am alive. I have awakened. My body will live forever in this eternal land." — from the Egyptian burial ceremony

The story of the gods Isis and Osiris explains why the ancient Egyptians felt they had to turn dead bodies into mummies and build vast pyramids to put them in. Osiris, the first king of Egypt, was murdered by his brother Seth and his body was divided into pieces. Osiris's wife, Isis, put the body together and breathed life back into it. Horus, son of Isis and Osiris, defeated Seth. Osiris became one of the gods of the dead.

This legend explains how life after death came to be part of Egyptian culture. Mummification was important to the ancient Egyptians because they believed if the body was properly prepared, the dead person would live on in the afterlife. The funeral ceremony allowed the deceased to make the transition from one life to the next.

The process of mummification took 70 days. Anubis, god of embalming (a priest in a jackal mask), supervised the ceremony. First, the internal organs were removed and placed in jars with stylized animal heads. After the brain was removed, the body was soaked in chemicals, dried, then filled with straw. The arms were crossed on the chest in the pose of Osiris. The body was coated with resin, then wrapped in linen. Spells were repeated at each
wrapping. A scarab (beetle-shaped) amulet was placed over the heart so the deceased would be able to enter the underworld.

The underworld was believed to be in the west, where the sun died every night. So after the mummy was laid in the coffin it was taken down the Nile to the west bank. There, a tomb—sometimes a huge pyramid—had been built and filled with items the dead person would need in the afterlife. In the burial chamber, the most important ceremony was held—the Opening of the Mouth. The Egyptians believed that when the body died, the spirit left it. For a person to be reborn, the spirit had to return, enter the mummy through the mouth, and breathe life back into the body.

To begin the ceremony, the mummy was set upright (above). Then the priest chanted while touching the mummy’s face with various tools. At the end of the ritual, the body was placed in a mummy-shaped container. If the deceased was a queen or pharaoh (see pages 8-9), the case would be nested in a series of increasingly elaborate containers. The mummy would then be sealed in the tomb, ready for its final journey.

Above: Anubis, king of the dead and embalming, holds a mummy upright, while priests chant and touch the mummy with special tools.
Tomb painting. Opening of the Mouth. c. 1000 B.C. Deir el-Medina.

Below: A large "eye of Horus" was often painted on the side of many mummy cases, allowing the deceased to look outward.
Wooden outer coffin of Lady Maidia. c. 1480 B.C. Photo. The Granger Collection.
Coffins for an Egyptian Queen

Mysterious Images

The huge works made by contemporary African-American sculptor Martin Puryear might have been created during earlier civilizations. His giant handcrafted sculptures are so stylized they appear completely abstract. The organic shapes and natural materials the artist has used in works such as Old Mole (right) suggest many subjects—figures, plants and animals.

Old Mole's shape resembles that of a bird. In Egyptian art, birds were symbols of freedom, liberation, and power. The vitality of the human spirit when freed of limitations is a theme running through many of Puryear's works. Old Mole was built with curved slats of wood. The wooden bands are wrapped and interwoven in the way that strips of cloth were wrapped around a mummy. About the size of a mummy case, this sculpture has the same mysterious quality. Each slat has only to be peeled away to reveal the secret hidden deep within the work's center.

A Modern God

French artist Niki de Saint Phalle (ne-kee de san FAH) makes sculptures that are big enough to walk through. She once constructed an 82-foot-long hollow sculpture of a sleeping woman that contained a restaurant, a planetarium, and a movie theater. Saint Phalle is best-known for her fantastic animals and a series of oversize women with outstretched arms decorated with flowers, hearts, and other designs.

In her bronze sculpture Horus (left), the artist combines two of her favorite subjects; she places a hawk's head on a human body. The work is named for the ancient Egyptian god who guided the deceased through the underworld. The work's larger-than-life-size scale (nearly eight feet tall), shimmering golden surface texture, and unrealistic, stylized form project the mystery and grandeur of an ancient deity. The negative circular shape formed by the raised arms suggests the symbolic orb that Egyptian artists placed over the heads of their gods and goddesses.

"I am interested in exploring the ancient traditions of feminine deities."

—Niki de Saint Phalle
Making a Mummy Case

Kristen Papczun, 18, has always been interested in the ancient Egyptians. Last year, in her senior year at R. B. Chamberlin High School in Twinsburg, Ohio, she finished the amazing mummy case on the right. Kristen worked on this nearly lifesize sculpture for over a year and a half. Now a freshman at Kent State University, Kristen plans to go into art education or interior design.

How did you get involved in art?
I've done it ever since I was little. I got recognition, so that made me want to do it more. Also, my grandfather was an artist. I find I use art as a way to challenge myself. I love taking an idea and developing it to its fullest extent.

Where did you get the idea for this award-winning piece?
Someone had built a large box for another art class, but then they didn't use it. I've always been into Egyptian culture, and when I saw this big box with a hinged door in it, I thought it looked just like a sarcophagus. I knew just what I wanted to do, so I started to research King Tut and Ra, the sun god. I had a slew of ideas going on in my head.

How did you begin?
The box was about four feet tall and a foot and a half wide. I drew a picture of a figure you might see on the front of a mummy case. It was simplified, not intricate. I cut the drawing into different parts. Then I arranged the pieces and used the pattern to design a series of clay tiles. The front is kind of a mosaic.

For the sides and top, I made tiles that looked like lotus petals and stems. The lotus was a popular Egyptian flower; it appeared in a lot of paintings and tombs. I fired the tiles, then glazed them in bronze, yellow, and sky-blue. The lotus flowers are purple, the stems green. I glued the tiles on and put grout between them. The grout colors were chosen to complement the tiles.

How long did the project take?
The whole piece took a year and a half, working on it two hours a day in art.
Mythical Creatures

Like the Egyptians, these modern artists have created new types of animals

Abstract Animals

Does this sculpture (above) by 20th-century American artist Alexander Calder remind you of anything in nature? Or does it just appear to be a piece of abstract art? Looking at the work's title might help you to answer these questions.

"Animals—Action. These two words go hand in hand." —Alexander Calder

Calder is best known for inventing a new form of sculpture, which he called the mobile. Works like Yellow Whale are made up of metal shapes that hang from the ceiling and move in different ways. Most of Calder's mobiles, like this one, may look abstract. But they are always based on some aspect of nature, usually an animal. To make one of his mobiles, Calder would reduce his subject to its most basic form, then cut the simplified shapes out of sheets of steel. He wanted his creations to seem alive, so movement is a very important element. He used the natural force of the wind to power his mobiles.

Calder's sculptures are so well balanced that when the shapes move they continually produce new compositions and relationships. In Yellow Whale, groups of triangular red shapes surround the large yellow one, suggesting schools of smaller fish as they circle a stylized whale.
class. The ceramics part alone took me my whole junior year. I came in a lot during the summer too.

**What came next?**
I created a collage mosaic inside the case. I glued cut-out pieces of magazine to the wood, then used the glue to trace over the colors I wanted to preserve. After the glue dried, I washed the surface with turpentine, which fades the colors and creates an antique look. Then I outlined the dried glue with black magic marker.

**Did you create the mummy last?**
Yes. I made a papier-mâché figure with the arms crossed like a mummy. I took the mummy to art class, wrapped it with plaster of Paris strips, and let it dry. Finally, I took brown and gray stain and painted over the mummy to give it an old, decrepit look. It really looked moldy and gross. I used wire to suspend it inside the box. As a final touch, I fastened shimmery gold metallic cloth around the body, like a shroud.

**What’s the title of this piece?**
It’s called “Eternity in a Box.” A mummy is really just a carcass in a box. But the ancient Egyptians did so many things to insure its protection. I’m fascinated by the whole ritual of mummifying. Taking the body and brain — and inners — and preserving them is both gross and fascinating. When I was young I wanted to be an archaeologist, mainly because of Egyptian art.
Capturing an Animal’s

Create a stylized form that expresses the qualities of

The ancient Egyptians felt that animals held magical powers. Their gods could fly like birds, run as fast as jackals, be as strong as lions and as fierce as crocodiles. In order to insure the protection and favor of these gods, ancient Egyptians wore charms, or amulets, in the shape of highly stylized animals.

In this workshop, you’ll create a miniature animal sculpture that, like an Egyptian amulet, embodies the animal’s essence.

Materials

- Small rectangular cubes of moist, self-hardening clay, paper clay, or molded plaster approximately 3" x 3" x 5". The product should be able to dry without cracking.
- Variety of simple ceramic and/or clay modeling tools.
- Variety of wire end tools
- Paper clips and tooth picks (for use as modeling tools)
- Large plastic produce or grocery bag and twist tie
- Old dinner plates/heavy plastic sheet to hold work
- Plastic wrap
- Nature magazines (National Wildlife, National Geographic)
- Spray bottle
- Paper towels
- Container (margarine cup size)

Starting out

Look through old nature magazines and choose an animal that interests you; find a photo that shows a clear, recognizable view of the entire animal. Decide whether your
sculpture will be of the whole animal, or part of the animal emerging from the base.

**Step 2**
Do sketches that simplify and stylize your subject. Eliminate nonessential details. Your sculpture should emphasize traits (power, gentleness, grace, cunning) associated with your animal. Try to capture the animal's distinctive physical characteristics.

**Step 3**
Scratch in a general outline of the animal's silhouette on a clay rectangle; make proportions accurate. Sculpt animal in a compact reclining or sitting position to avoid thin shapes. Begin by subtracting (cutting away/removing) small pieces. Turn work and view it from every side, top, and below. Stylize/simplify basic form as you go along. Eliminate details. Sculpt arms and legs close to the body. Keep main part of body close to the base. When the general shape is completed, eyes and mouth indicated, you may begin suggesting surface texture. Cut rectangular base so its size relates proportionally to your sculpture.

**Some Solutions**
First decide if you will sculpt the whole animal or part. Will your primary point of view be from above or the side? Will you set your animal on top of the base? Or will your sculpture emerge from the base? Will your animal's blocky shape echo the base's rectangular shape, or will its circular shape contrast with the base? Your animal's pose can be static. Or it can take the active pose of an animal about to spring into motion. Your shape can be solid and closed, or you can use negative space as part of your sculpture. Your animal's texture can be rough, smooth, furry, or shiny. You can use angular or curved surface patterns.
The ancient Egyptians believed their gods were superhuman. So they gave them physical qualities they admired in certain animals.

On the right are pictures of six ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses. Study the list below to see which three words or phrases apply to each of the pictures.

a. Goddess of Protection
b. Ra
c. baboon
d. jackal
e. God of the Dead
   (specializes in embalming)
f. Nekhbet
g. hawk
h. God of Wisdom
i. cow
j. Thoth
k. Anubis
l. God of the Dead
   (specializes in guiding the deceased through the underworld)
m. falcon
n. Sun God
o. Goddess of Daily Life
p. vulture
q. Horus
r. Hathor

Beside each number below, write the three letters that apply to each picture. We’ve done the first one for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Animal</th>
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