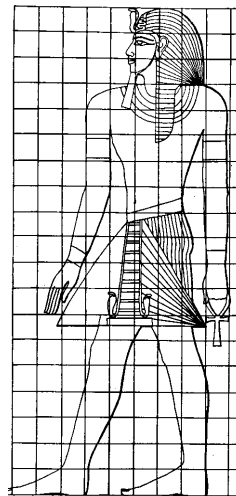


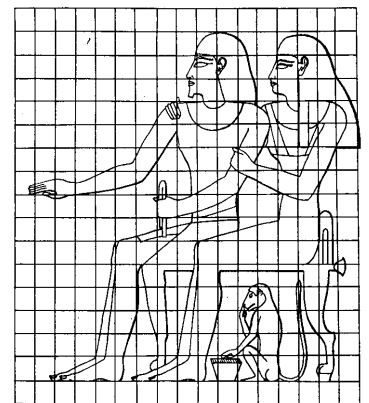
Features of Egyptian painting and relief art

Egyptian art served almost exclusively the cult of the gods and the dead. The walls of tombs and temples, the columns, statues and reliefs were colourfully painted with tempera paints. To make them, colour pigments were bound with egg white and glue. In rock tombs and temples, cycles of images depicted life, profession, death, burial, the court of the dead and the entry of the deceased into the afterlife. Sequences of actions were depicted as sequences of images. Their structure was canonically determined.

The first illustration was written on a sheet of papyrus or a stone slab in into a network of 18 rows of square squares. The distance from from the forehead to the neck was two rows, from the neck to the knees, ten rows, from the knees to the soles of the feet six rows. For the hair above the forehead an additional 19th row was added. According to the same principle, a seated figure figure occupied 15 field rows. This system of proportions system was preserved until the late period.



KANON DER ÄGYPTISCHEN KUNST



Egyptian art was two-dimensional. In the beginning, it dispensed with any perspective. Faces, for example, were shown in profile, but the eye was shown from the front. When depicting bodies, the shoulders were turned forward and the chest, body and feet were shown in side view. In addition, both in sculpture and in painting, the "value rule" applied: persons of greater importance were also depicted larger. The king was taller than his vizier, who in turn was taller than his servant.

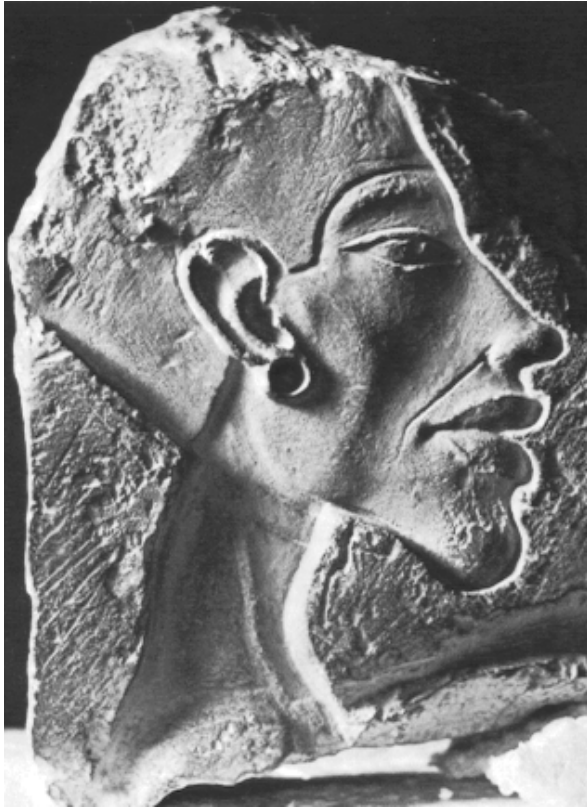


Limestone stele of Sesostris from Abydos
Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty c. 1950 BC



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For a long time, only the basic colours were used for painting. Only later did people mix light and dark colours and intermediate shades. The colours also had a symbolic meaning: Amun, the god of heaven, was painted with blue skin colour, Osiris was painted green when he appeared as the god of vegetation, black when he appeared as the god of the underworld, the god of death or rebirth. Yellow together with red signified immortality. Red colour alone was used for evil and for everything negative.



During the reign of the "heretic king" Akhenaten, the selection of persons depicted changed. The multitude of images of the gods disappeared. Only the single god Aton appeared in the form of the sun. Painting and relief became deformed through exaggerated realism. On the reliefs of the city of Amarna, built by Akhenaten, there are representations of humans with overlong limbs and long skulls on thin necks. An oversized chin and heavy, overly full lips distorted the faces almost into caricatures.

Relief portrait of King Akhenaten from Amarna
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty c. 1345 BC

Later rulers returned to the old gods and to idealised representations in painting and relief art. Under Ramses II, monumental paintings were created depicting battles with the Hittites, Syrians and Libyans. Here, the victorious Pharaoh had himself immortalised on his battle chariot in the midst of the tumult of battle.

During Roman rule, the Egyptians largely preserved the peculiarities of their mode of representation. The need to distinguish themselves from the occupying power even led in part to a conscious reversion to traditional painting methods, resulting in archaic forms. With the decline of the Egyptian pharaonic empire and the old religion, the epoch of Egyptian art also ended.

