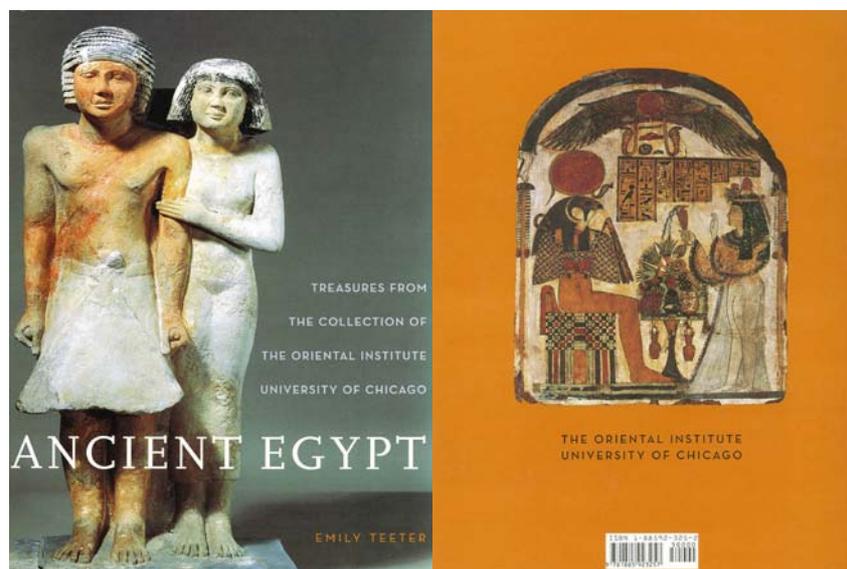


Teeter, E. 2003. Ancient Egypt. Treasures from the collection of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. – Chicago, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

Book review by C.H. van Zoest



The famous Oriental Institute at Chicago houses one of the largest collections of Egyptian objects in the USA (between 25,000 and 30,000 artefacts). Among these are a number of fine representatives of styles and periods of various types of object. Although many of them have been published over the years in Egyptological journals and handbooks, no single catalogue or overview has been made available until now. The present publication, containing descriptions of seventy-eight highlights from the collection, thus fills a void.

The book is nothing less than one would expect from the Oriental Institute. The descriptions are highly informative and well-written. High quality photos and a balanced page layout make for an informative and attractive read. Much attention has been given to detail; the appendices and indices adequately shift information that is of little interest to the general reader away from the main text. Egyptologists, on the other hand, can safely skip the Glossary and Chronology.

The objects are presented in chronological order rather than by category, but the selection is varied so that examples of sculpture, religious objects, funerary goods, household items, papyri and ostraca and even textiles are all represented. For any text that is not translated a reference to a translation is given, and again the layout is such that this detailed information is available to the scholar but unobtrusive to the general reader.

Preceding the descriptions of the 62 catalogued items (some of the numbers encompass a small group of objects) is a 'History of the Egyptian Collection', the foundation for which was laid by J.H. Breasted from 1895 until 1935. He purchased antiquities in Egypt, and he also photographed a large number of monuments, which are kept as glass negatives. His collection was gradually augmented from the excavations of the Egypt Exploration Fund and Egyptian Research Account, and later from the Institute's own excavations at Medinet Habu. Most of the additions were made up to and including the 1930s, but a number of significant additions have been made since then. The publication of the present catalogue stems from the refurbishing of the Institute's Egyptian gallery in 1999.

The website of the Oriental Institute, well-known for its useful resources, contains a small selection of highlights from the OI collection (for the Egyptian objects, see: http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/HIGH/OI_Museum_Egypt.html). But it is pleasant to note that the material presented here is not simply a recycled version of the catalogue; half of the objects on the website are additional to the book.

In the Acknowledgements, the author expresses her hope that the book will bring the rich collection of the Oriental Institute to the attention of both scholars and the general public. It is ideally suited to do just that.

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