

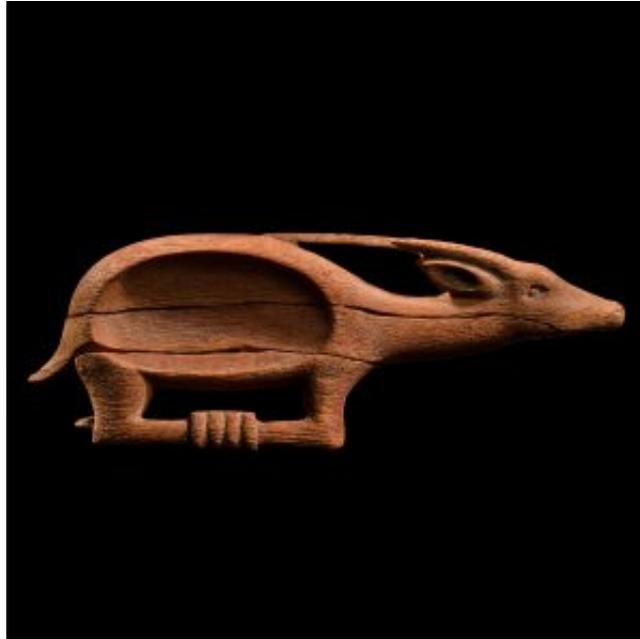
ANTELOPE DISH

New Kingdom, 1552 - 1069 B.C.

Wood

L: 18.4 cm (7.2 in)

Reference: 1437



This animal-shaped object has a depression on one side that was carved for the presentation of cosmetic substances; usually the flat vessels were designed to contain the mineral pigments necessary for the preparation of cosmetics used by the Egyptians in quantities in their everyday hygiene. As luxury goods, the most elaborate vessels also indicate the status of the owner.

The piece being part of the type of zoomorphic boxes and dishes representing the recumbent animals has a specific composition of a bound animal. The anatomy of the animal is realistically rendered to recognize the specie; at same time the shapes of the body are stylized, and the lines of the curved back, long neck and the horns are especially delicate. The outline is never interrupted and continues over the spread horns which touch the back and the legs which are bound below the belly. The connection of legs and horns to the body is also necessitated by the reason to stabilize the openwork. This container, a utilitarian object, is a remarkable example of Egyptian decorative arts.

To indicate even more details which do not appear in the carving, the piece was most probably painted, in this case the dark markings in the face and on the legs would be realistically shown with contrasting colors. Oryx (a kind of antelope), who inhabited the steppes along the Nile valley, was a familiar animal for the Egyptian hunters. In their religious beliefs the "land of death" inhabited by abundant animals became a potent symbol of life after death. Royal tombs and funerary monuments preserved innumerable representations of desert and steppe animals in painting and reliefs, and several objects shaped as animals, beside their direct functional purpose, were considered as amulets. Similar cosmetic boxes and containers became the most common gifts that the deceased carried to the netherworld and found in both male and female graves. It is assumed that the bound animals more likely represent the temple or tomb offerings.

PROVENANCE

Ex- European private collection

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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