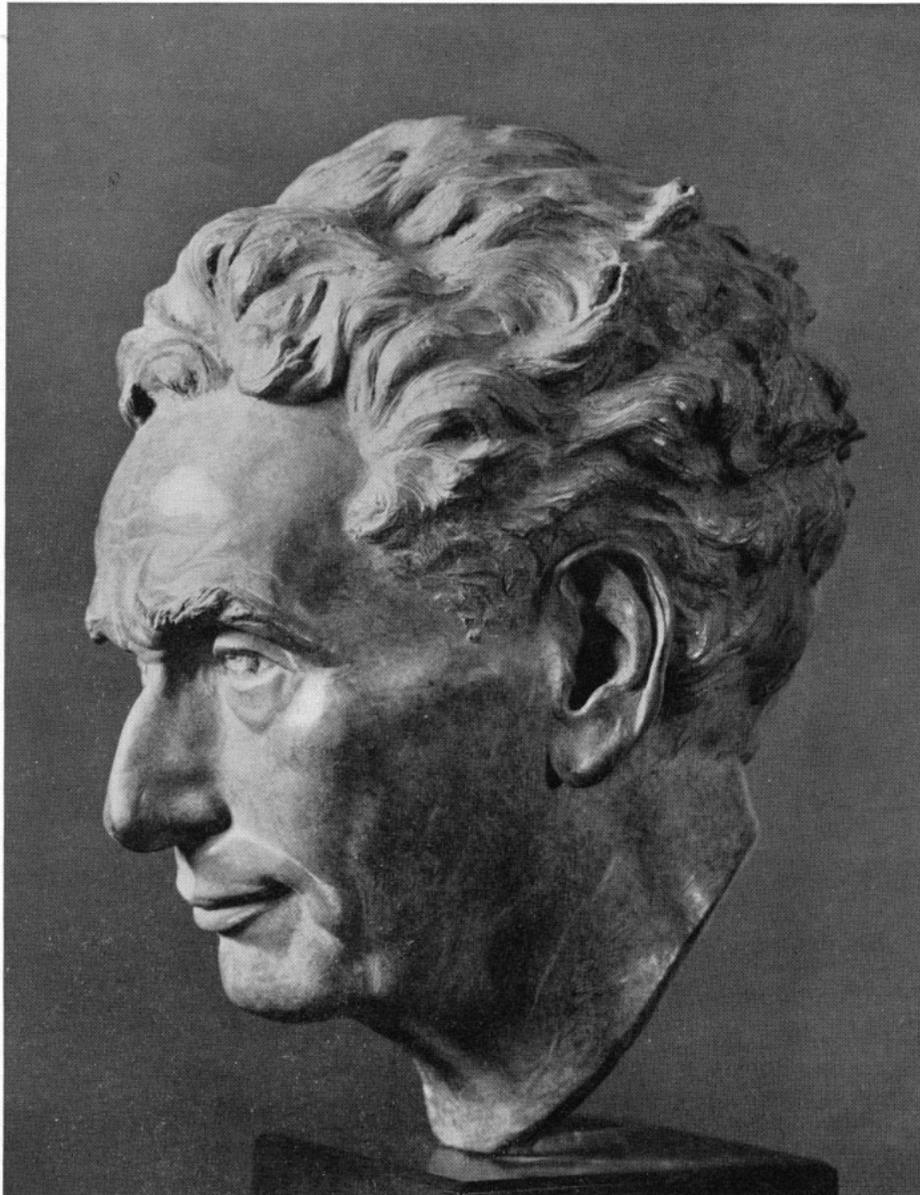


BULLETIN OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

VOLUME XLI

BOSTON, FEBRUARY, 1943

NUMBER 243



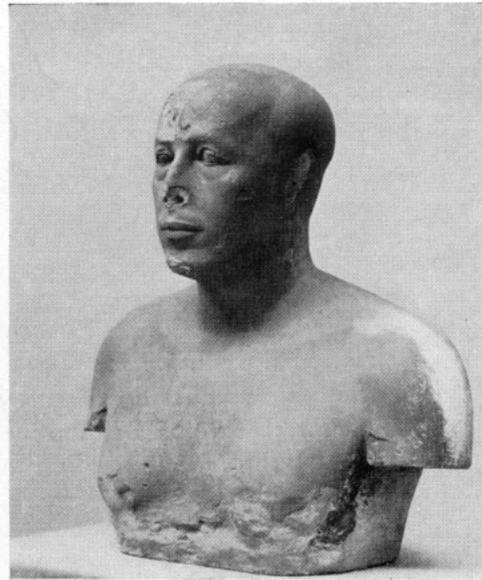
Louis D. Brandeis, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Portrait in bronze by Eleanor Platt
Gift of William de Kraft

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

SUBSCRIPTION ONE DOLLAR



Ankh-haf in Modern Dress



Original Limestone Bust of Ankh-haf

An Experiment with an Egyptian Portrait Ankh-haf in Modern Dress

MUCH has been written by scholars about the portrait value of Egyptian sculpture. Some have maintained that the likeness to the individual was in many instances close, while others have taken the contrary view and have claimed that almost all Egyptian statues and reliefs are generalizations with but little claim to portrait likeness in our sense. It is not possible fully to prove either contention since we can never compare an ancient Egyptian figure with the original subject. But apart from this fundamental difficulty we also have another to contend with: Egyptian sculpture represents people in an unfamiliar setting, either without clothing, or with wigs and other articles of costume which are strange to us.

The portrait bust of Prince Ankh-haf of the Fourth Dynasty (No. 27.442), perhaps the most realistic Egyptian portrait preserved, is the work of one of the great masters of the Old Kingdom, and is totally lacking in the conventionality so common in works of Egyptian portraiture. One of the greatest treasures of the Egyptian Department, this bust was evacuated out of the Museum nearly a year ago as a precaution against possible damage by enemy action. Before being sent away a cast was made from the original for temporary exhibition for the duration of the war. An imperfect duplicate cast was tinted in flesh tones, and the eyes, eyebrows, and hair were colored in an approximation to lifelike values. This cast was then fitted with modern clothing in a somewhat jocular effort to satisfy the writer's curiosity as to what an ancient Egyptian nobleman would look like if living today in our own familiar world. The result was so striking that it has seemed justifiable to publish a photograph, which is here given for comparison with one of the original head.

Discounting the broken nose and the absence of ears, one is struck by the modernity of the face, which might be met with any day in the street. There is nothing in it to indicate its ancient Egyptian source,—none of the conventional treatment of eyes and mouth which we associate with Egyptian sculpture. And it is interesting to note that the hat and coat of the writer, who is six feet tall and weighs about 160 pounds, fit the ancient Egyptian perfectly.

This experiment in modernizing one of the masterpieces of Egyptian sculpture, undertaken at first in a whimsical mood of curiosity, actually has a serious value. It serves to bring out the absence of convention in certain of the great works of the ancient masters, and, to some at least, it adds weight to the conviction that the best works of portraiture were real physical likenesses of actual people who lived and thought and had individuality during a great civilization of the remote past.

DOWS DUNHAM.

Death of John Ellerton Lodge

JOHN ELLERTON LODGE, Director of the Freer Gallery in Washington, D. C., died on December 29, 1942. For many years he was active in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, having joined the staff in 1911 and having been made Curator of Asiatic Art in 1915. In 1921 he was appointed Director of the Freer Gallery, and for ten years thereafter carried on this work in addition to his Curatorship in Boston, resigning from the latter position in 1931 when he decided that his full time and attention were needed in Washington. His high standards and discriminating taste were long recognized by connoisseurs in the field of Oriental art.