Egyptian Art The Amarna Revolution

Research · October 2011

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.23798.65600

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Egyptian Art: The Amarna Revolution

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31 October 2011

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1. Introduction

Ancient Egyptian art, which remained relatively stable over a period spanning 3,500 years, aimed to not only preserve political and religious order but to also embodify life (Brewer & Teeter 2007:189; Silverman 1997:212; Tiradritti 2002:8). As a result ancient Egyptian art strictly adhered to conformity and standardization with artists always aiming to reflect reality, movement and time in their masterpieces (Brewer & Teeter 2007:197; Tiradritti 2002:8).

However, during the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca.1351-1334 BCE) Amenhotep IV, later in his reign known as Akhenaten, replaced the various traditional Egyptian deities by one deity, namely the Aten (Silverman 1997:221). This deliberate endeavor inevitably resulted in not only major cultural changes but also radically unorthodox Egyptian art which were all linked to Akhenaten's religious agenda (Brewer & Teeter 2007:206; Silverman 1997:221; Tiradritti 2002:78-83).

What made Amarna art different from customary Egyptian art? This project aims to discover the unique traits of Amarna art and will answer the following research question: *"What are the characteristics of Amarna art?"*. Due to the vast array of pieces of Amarna art and the limited scope of this project the focus in this research will be on reliefs, statues and colossals, murals together with utilitarian objects and personal art.
In order to fully appreciate the distinctive nature of Amarna art, the discussion on Amarna art will be placed within Akhenaten's monotheistic religious ideology. Also, a description of the Egyptian worldview will be provided to enable a comprehensive understanding of the individuality of Akhenaten's artistic revolution (Robins 1997:18).

2. The ancient Egyptian worldview

Egyptians were strongly influenced by their surroundings and viewed the existence of nature, human beings as well as cosmic entities as constantly being driven by the powerful forces of chaos and order (Robins 1997:14, 17). As a result, ancient Egyptians viewed their world in dualities. For instance, Egyptians saw the fertile land around the Nile as ‘order’ whilst the sterile desert land was perceived as ‘chaos’ and people

worshipping Egyptian deities were also seen as ‘order’ compared to those who were devoted to foreign gods as ‘chaotic’.

It was crucial for Egyptians to maintain order in their society and relied on their king to achieve that purpose (Robins 1997:17, 18; Shaw 2000;92; Teeter 1994:15). The king was seen as the sole person who could connect with the gods and as a result, throughout Egyptian history, was viewed as the most vital human being in Egyptian society and ensured continued support from all Egyptians (Shaw 2000:92; Teeter 1994:15). The king's actions also guaranteed the annual flooding of the Nile, safety from invasions by foreigners, the regular change of seasons as well as the orderly protection from the aggressive forces in the universe (Shaw 2000:92). To assist the pharaoh in achieving his goals, the king ordered the production of a plethora of masterpieces in order to serve a functional rather than an aesthetic purpose (Freed 2001; Robins 1997:12; Teeter 1994:15). At first, the majority of these pieces depict the pharaoh performing rituals which assisted the king in strengthening order in the universe (Robins 1997:17). Secondly creating images of the pharaoh, the gods and the deceased ensured that Egyptians could survive in the afterlife, ultimately joining the spheres of the dead and the living (Freed 2001; Robins 1997:12).

3. General characteristics of ancient Egyptian art

Overall, two styles of artistic expression existed in traditional Egyptian art, namely relief and sculpture (Tiradritti 2002:6). Reader to be aware that painting of objects complemented two-dimensional symbols rather than being an object of art *per se*.

3.1 Materials used in Egyptian art

Throughout Egyptian history artists used a wide variety of materials to produce their collections of work. For instance, stone, limestone, calcite together with diorite, granite, basalt and quartzite were most frequently used for vessels, temples, offerings tables as well as statues and stelae (Robins 1997:24). Artists frequently made use of gold, to depict the skin of deities, and silver to illustrate lunar objects on statues (Robins 1997:19-20). Baked clay and wood were also used for statuettes but were often reserved for

common people (Brewer & Teeter 2007:193). Artists also used blue-green faience which was molded and mass produced in the form of rings, ear sheds and amulets (Robins 1997:25). Egyptian artists also regularly decorated statues and sculptures with astonishing realistic eyes made of rock crystals, quartz and obsidian (Brewer & Teeter 2007:191).

3.2 Assortment of colours

Colours played an important role in ancient Egyptian art as it symbolized Egyptian beliefs (Robins 1997:27; Brewer & Teeter 2007:190). Egyptians played around with different colours and shades with the intention of obtaining different effects, such as the combination of white calcium carbonate and black carbon to produce grey (Robins 1997:27).

Black	Carbon, especially charcoal
White	Calcium carbonate for whiting and calcium sulphate for gypsum
Light yellow to dark brown	Ochre (iron oxide) – a mineral of clay and iron oxide that ranges in colour from light yellow to brown or red
Bright yellow	Orpiment to represent gold
Pale yellow	Jarosite
Blue	Azurite

Fig.1. Overview of how Egyptians obtained colour from nature (Brewer & Teeter 2007:190; Robins 1997:27)

Colour had not only an aesthetic appeal but also a metaphorical meaning for Egyptians (Brewer & Teeter 2007:202; Robins 1997:24). For instance, green and blue were associated with the Nile, its vegetation, life as well as resurrection. Gold and yellow represented the flesh of the gods and the sun god. Red and orange represented vitality, blood, power as well as the desert. Black symbolized the life-giving flow of the Nile as well as the revival of Osiris, which was often illustrated with a black skin.

Fig.2. Sculpture of a family depicting the different skin tones between male and female (http://christogenea.org/Overview/imagesegypt/Ancient_Egyptian_family_group.jpg)

Also, silver was seen firstly as the material of which the bones of the gods were made and secondly as a symbol of the moon. Men were portrayed with red skin, almost certainly due to the length of time they spent outdoors whilst women were illustrated with paler and light yellow skin as a result of their lack of exposure to the sun.

3.3. The importance of 'frontality'

Egyptian artists never aimed to integrate depth and volume in their work but rather aspired to render a masterpiece in its most appealing trait (Robins 1997:19,21). In two-dimensional art this goal was achieved by depicting an object either in full view. In order to ensure that the frontality requirement was maintained, certain standardized renderings for specific body parts were followed. For example, a figure's head, nose and lips were always shown in profile whilst the eyebrows and eyes were depicted in full view; shoulders were shown in full view at the same time as the limbs, calves, buttocks and hips were shown in profile. Although items on the chest and the naval were shown in full view, nipples were shown in profile. Also, until the Old Kingdom both feet were shown

with the big toe, the arch and from the inside but following the Eighteenth Dynasty feet were illustrated from the outside whilst depicting all the toes.

Egyptian three-dimensional art also displayed frontality (Robins 1997:19). Objects were placed facing straight ahead with no twisting body parts whilst the object appeared idealized and motionless. This positioning assisted a religious purpose as it allowed the gods to observe from within the shrine whilst Egyptians performed their rituals in front of the statues (Robins 1997:19).

Fig.3. Stone statue of Hatshepsut

(http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/eg/web-large/DT256950.jpg)

4. Unique traits of traditional Egyptian art

Traditional ancient Egyptian art has a variety of unique traits. For instance, it always depicts the importance of the gods and the power of the king. Also, applying balance and symmetry in art allows for the illustration of people's different social standings whilst the idealised illustration of human figures emphasised Egyptians' belief in continuing their fruitful life that they have on earth in the afterlife. Additionally emotion and movement in art were avoided at all cost. Moreover, the prominence of Egyptians' participation in observing their environment was strongly depicted in their detailed portrayal of their environment. The various distinctive characteristics of customary Egyptian art will be discussed in more detail below.

4.1. Polytheism: The importance of deities in Egyptian art

The mysterious world of royal as well as non-royal ancient Egyptians were characterized by the passionate desire to worship and appease the abundance of traditional gods that existed in the ancient Egyptian pantheon (Wilkinson 2003:6-7). Deities were omnipresent, appearing on household shrines, temple reliefs as well as tomb paintings and on statues. As a result, Egyptian gods were the centerpieces of ancient Egyptian art.

Scale in Egyptian art was crucial for Egyptians as the size of a figure indicated the importance of the figure illustrated (Silverman 1997:213,215). Due to the importance of the numerous deities illustrations thereof were always larger than those of human figures. Also, due to the importance of the pharaoh, the king was forever larger than any other illustrated human figures whilst laypeople, such as servants, entertainers and outsiders, were often depicted smaller than royalty. This is evident in the wall painting of the Menna family which shows royalty as much larger than non-royal individuals.

Fig.4. Menna and his family fishing and fowling
(http://www.ask-aladdin.com/images/menna_tomb.jpg)

4.2. People and their idealised portrayal

One of the most prominent characteristics of ancient Egyptian art is the idealized depiction of human figures as Egyptians not only wanted to be remembered for the ideal form in which they wanted to remain in the afterlife but they also wanted to preserve the order in their perfect world (Johnson 2001; Brewer & Teeter 2007:189-190,204,207; Frankfort 1958:159). For example, distinctive individual traits, such as wrinkles and illness, were shunned by artists whilst men were portrayed with muscular features, such as broad shoulders and women were shown as skinny and long-legged (Brewer & Teeter 189-190). Overall, individuals were always illustrated as childlike and in prime physical condition and if an artist had to depict the pharaoh as he was in real life it would have been unacceptable (Frankfort 1958:159; Johnson 2001).

Egyptian artists constantly aimed to maintain symmetry and balance in their works of art. One way to maintain the idealized way of depicting individuals was to use an 18-square grid system, characterized by horizontal and vertical lines with each square based on the thickness of a human clenched fist (Johnson 2001; Teeter 1994:16). This ensured that all figures were depicted in a physically perfect, homogenous and standardized manner. Artists had standardized measures for illustrating various parts of the human figure. For instance, male figures were measured from the bottom of the foot to the end of the hairline (Brewer & Teeter 2007:197-199); female figures were depicted in the standardized manner but they were smaller than male figures and their lower backs were positioned higher than those of their counterparts (Brewer & Teeter 2007:197-199).

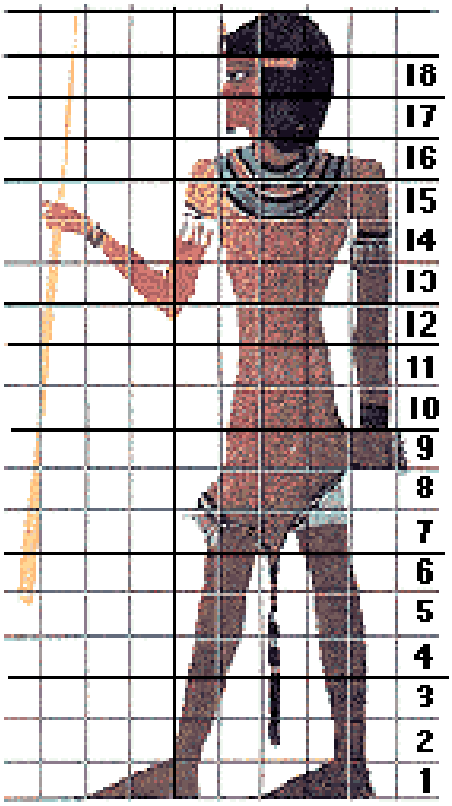


Fig.5. Preparation along horizontal and vertical lines
(http://www.egyptartsite.com/photo/grid.gif)

Also, women were shown with one high and rounded breast (Brewer & Teeter 2007:200); a hand was always depicted with all its fingers and upside down (Brewer & Teeter 2007:200) whilst a human foot was illustrated with a prominent arch for both the left and right foot (Brewer & Teeter 2007:200-201). When depicting a husband and wife together, the wife was frequently depicted to the viewer's right whilst for standing works of art the wife usually had her arm around the husband's shoulder (Brewer & Teeter 2007:201). Lastly, when a wife and husband were shown at a table of offerings, the husband would always be at the observer's left (Brewer & Teeter 2007:201).

4.3. Realistic depiction of nature

In contrast to the idealised illustration of human figures, artists aimed to depict nature and animals as detailed and realistically as possible (Brewer & Teeter 2007:206). For instance, often reliefs depicted individuals hunting or fishing whilst statues of animals frequently showed detailed portrayals of the animal's anatomy.

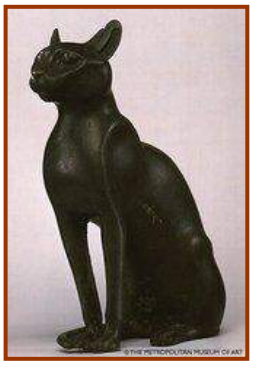


Fig.6. Sphinx of Senwosret III
(http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/newegypt/htm/th_frame.htm)
Fig.7. Goddess Bastet
(http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/newegypt/htm/th_frame.htm)
Fig.8. Relief of Hippopotamus
(http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/newegypt/htm/th_frame.htm)

For instance, the Sphinx of Senwosret III noticeably indicates the maturing characteristics of a pharaoh, something that would have been unorthodox in the king's human figure display. Also, a statue of a black cat, the goddess Bastet, clearly shows smooth muscles and a detailed expression on the face, while a relief of a hippopotamus depicts the animal with a rounded belly and many layers of skin beneath the chin.

4.4. Limited depiction of movement

The depicting of extreme movement was avoided in traditional Egyptian art. Rather, the sense of action was subtly shown by placing figures side by side (Tiradritti 2002:9). For instance, the disc found in the tomb of Hemaka (First Dynasty) shows a jackal which at first appears to be chasing what appears to be a gazelle which is then followed by the kill. Tiradritti (2002:9) indicates that the circular shape of the disc enhances the sense of movement. Also, a wall fragment found in Unsu's tomb shows each of the three registers depicting a different phase of the cultivation process, however, keeping the depiction of movement very conservative.

Fig.9. Black steatite disc found in tomb of Hemaka - 1st Dynasty (ca.2920-2770 BCE) (8.7x0.7cm)
http://www.touregypt.net/images/touregypt/hemakadisc.jpg

Fig.10. Wall fragment found in Unsu's tomb
(http://www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/illustration/atlas/x196image_65293_v2_m56577569830699096.jpg)

4.5. Conceptual rather than perceptual art

Ancient Egyptian art can be characterized as conceptual instead of perceptual as the meaning thereof is important from the object's point of view rather than from the perspective of the viewer (Brewer & Teeter 2007:194-196; Teeter 1994:16). As a result, artists avoided depicting emotion, arduous physical activities and the illusion of space, light and shadow which inevitably was at the expensive of creativity (Teeter 1994:15; Tiradritti 2002:8; Silverman 1997:82). This was further enhanced through artists working under the strict control of palace officials whilst not being allowed to reflect any individual imagination (Brewer & Teeter 2007:207). As a result ancient Egyptian masterpieces cannot be traced to a specific artist (Teeter 1994:15).

5. The heresy of Akhenaten

Amenhotep III's reign was characterized by wealth and power never seen before (Shaw 2000:265). Also, monuments and temples together with scarabs and colossal statues reached dimensions unheard of in Egyptian history. Shaw (2000:264) also states that this period was very calm and prosperous and the Egyptian mindset became very open towards foreigners due to increased international diplomatic relationships. As a result, the foreign gods of migrants were introduced to Egyptian society and over a period of time a number of gods existed in the Egyptian pantheon, including the sungod Ra-Horakhty which together with the pharaoh lay at the core of Egyptian religious belief (Brewer & Teeter 2007:105; Frankfort 1958:152; Robins 1997:149; Shaw 2000:266; Tiradritti 2002:78).

Fig.11. Boundary stele at Amarna
(http://www.mindserpent.com/American_History/books/White_History/bg/stela_s.jpeg)

However, it was during his son Amenhotep IV's seventeen-year reign that the name of the Ra-Horakhty-cult was expanded and taken to new heights through a radical and newly imposed theology, namely Atenism (Schlögl 2005; Wente 2005). The falcon-headed god was now replaced with the non-anthropomorphic Ra cult which was for the first time presented in pictorial form, namely a sun-disk with rays ending in small hands (Frankfort 1958:157; Robins 1997:149). The new Amarna religion centred around the king and the light, and not the afterlife, and it is assumed that the prominence of the Aten was in essence a reflection of the divine and omni-powerful nature of Amenhotep IV (Hari 1985;10; Schlögl 2005). The underlying reason for Akhenaten's apparent fascination with the Aten is unclear, however, it is suggested that Akhenaten perceived it as the deified version of his father, the dazzling sun Amenhotep III (Wilkinson 2003:236-239). During Amenhotep IV's ('Amun is satisfied') fifth year of reign, he also changed his name to Akhenaten, also known as 'The One who is beneficial to the Aten' or 'Effective for Aten' (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53; Roehrig & Hill 1992:25). Amenhotep IV's potent identification with the Aten is evident in a hymn to the Aten (Frankfort 1958:155):

"Thou art in my heart
And there is no other that knows thee
Save thy son Nefer-Kheperu-Re Ua-en-Re [i.e. Akhenaten]
For thou hast made him well-versed in thy plans and in thy strength"

During year five of Akhenaten's reign he decided that his god the Aten needed a new metropolis (Hari 1985:8). As a result, the pharaoh changed the administrative centre from Thebes to Amarna where he built a brand new city, aptly naming it Akhetaten or 'horizon of the Aten' (Kuhrt 1997:187; Robins 1997:149; Tiradritti 2002:78; Wilkinson 2003:240-241). The new city was the virginal site chosen by the Aten for Akhenaten, evident in the boundary stelae which depict the royal family making offerings to the Aten (Frankfort 1958:162).

During his twelfth year in power Akhenaten banned the worship of other gods to such an extent that traditional deities' names were actively removed from all buildings to such an extent that Akhenaten instructed to erect 30 meter tall scaffold around obelisks carrying the names of these gods (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53; Kuhrt 1997:187; Roehrig & Hill 1992:25). Akhenaten also condoned maltreatment of anyone not obeying his orders and went as far as to instruct stonemasons to destroy any presence of the despised Amun whilst closing down all traditional temples throughout this empire (Dorsch 1991:2-4; Schlögl 2005).

This new development in religion resulted in a brand new creative standard, breaking the customary way in which Egyptians have always expressed themselves (Dorsch 1991:2-4). Overall, until the reign of Akhenaten, Egyptian art served religious and ritual functions; yet with his change in religion, the focus on idealism decreased and a drastic increase in individual identity and creativity, consciousness as well as artistic expression emerged which eventually transferred to the material and private spheres of Egyptian life.

Overall though, art during the reign of Akhenaten served to bolster his religious propaganda and intellectualism, resulting in an epoch of realism (Dorsch 1991:2-4) which was taken to the extreme and seen as grotesque and 'extraordinarily elegant' but nonetheless turning "…the Egyptian order effectively on its head" (Kuhrt 1997:197,199).

6. The Amarna art revolution

Although Akhenaten's heretic period only lasted for a decade, the art that came to the fore as a result of this radical change took on very unorthodox characteristics (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53; Ikram & Dodson 1998:40). According to Roehrig and Hill (1992:25) characteristics of Amarna art already appeared during the reign of Amenhotep III, such as the almond-shaped eyes evident in statues, but it was Akhenaten who further enhanced these grotesque features. Some scholars propose that exposure to foreign worldviews might have caused this drastic change in Amarna art (Davis 1978:387) whilst others suggest that it was a direct indication of how Judeo-Christian monotheism would evolve (Wilkinson 2003:36-39).

Amarna art could be divided into two main phases, namely the Early Phase and the Later Phase (Davis 1978:388). Art from the Early Phase is distinguished by radical, physiognomic and monstrous traits of royal and non-royal human figures. The traits were so extreme that scholars often find it difficult to fathom why a pharaoh would allow someone to depict him in such a manner. It was only during the Later Phase that characteristics of human figures became more humane and pleasing, even though the peculiar facial features continued to be depicted.

6.1. A new grid-system

In order to allow for the grotesque features of human figures artists during the Amarna Period ignored the traditional 18-squares grid system and rather aimed to depict reality in paintings, sculptures and other forms of art according to a 20-squares grid system (Johnson 2001). Extra squares were added between the shoulders and neck to accommodate the elongated neck whilst another square was added to the torso to allow space for the plump stomach (Robins 1997:150-151). Although the placement of the human knee was at the same point as those of traditional figures, in Amarna art the knee was less than the customary third of the hairline height, resulting in the legs of Amarna figures appearing shorter than the norm.

6.2. Monotheism: The Aten

During the first three years of Akhenaten's reign the Aten was at the head of the pantheon whilst other deities were allowed to maintain their positions therein (Schlögel 2005). This state of affairs however changed during Akhenaten's fourth year in power as he banned the various deities associated with death, such as Osiris and Sokar, and the Theban gods Amun, Mut, Amunet, Khonsu and Montu (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53; Ikram & Dodson 1998;85; Stevens 2006:6). Hari (1985:13) feels that Akhenaten wanted to reinvent the meaning of *Maat* as it no longer symbolised the meaning of justice and truth and no longer controlled the behaviour of human beings. Rather, the new *Maat* was now just the inspiration behind the world which the Aten created and maintained.

The core of Akhenaten's art revolved around the Aten which was perceived to be a jealous god who did not accept other gods (Ikram & Dodson 1998:85; Wente 2005). Schlögel (2005) aptly states that "…there is no god but Aten, and Akhenaten is his prophet". Overall, the king and royal family effectively replaced the conventional divine family triads with one god, namely the Aten (Kuhrt 1997:201; Schlögel 2005).

The Aten was never illustrated as a human figure but rather a sun-disk outfitted with a uraeus in abstract form (Schlögel 2005). Kuhrt (1997:201) and Roehrig and Hill (1992:25) indicate that the close bond between Akhenaten and the Aten was asserted by the sunrays originating from the Aten disc. Each of these rays ended in a minuscule hand which held the 'ankh' symbol of life and which ended at Akhenaten's nostrils. This non-anthropomorphic image of the Aten allowed for Akhenaten to always be at the centre of each piece of art, ultimately allowing for the first time in Egyptian history for the religious sphere and that of the king to merge (Kuhrt 1997:201; Schlögel 2005).

Fig.12. Relief showing the Aten celebrating a jubilee
(http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/fitzwilliam/images/fitzwilliam_sep2006_%20254.jpg)

The Aten also had other unique characteristics. For example, the Aten celebrated jubilees such as the Sed-festival, something very unusual as traditional deities normally gave this festival to the king rather than being the receivers thereof (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53; Kuhrt 1997:201; Robins 1997:152; Schlögl 2005). Also, the Aten's name was enclosed in cartouches which are an attribute that was normally reserved only for kings and queens. The Aten also remained silent, unlike customary gods which verbally corresponded with

the gods (Schlögl 2005). Lastly, distinct to traditional gods, the Aten did not need an accompanying companion (Schlögl 2005).

Akhenaten stressed that in Amarna art the Aten, the king of kings and the provider of light, had to be depicted as the sole cosmic king whereas Akhenaten himself had to be seen as the representation of the Aten on earth (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53; Ikram & Dodson 1998:40; Schlögl 2005). Akhenaten was the only mediator between the earthlings and the Aten and he was the only individual who knew the requirements as well as demands of the Aten. As a result, the Aten was inaccessible for the Egyptian people during the Amarna Period (Dorsch 1991:5).

Silverman (1997:89) and Dorsch (1991:6) note that never in ancient Egyptian history have any queen accomplished the eminence that was assigned to Nefirtiti. Also, no other queen was ever depicted on works of art as frequently as Nefertiti. The queen played a crucial role in the Aten cult as not only did she have the obligation to worship the Aten, she also was seen on the same level as Akhenaten although she did not have any additional supreme rights (Dorsch 1991:6). This unorthodox practice was especially evident in the depiction on temple walls and also on Amarna boundary stelae illustrating eulogies to the queen (www.crystalinks.com/nefertiti.html):

"And the Heiress, Great in the Palace, Fair of Face,
Adorned with the Double Plumes, Mistress of Happiness,
Endowed with Favours, at hearing whose voice the King rejoices,
the Chief Wife of the King, his beloved, the Lady of the Two Lands,
Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti, May she live for Ever and Always"

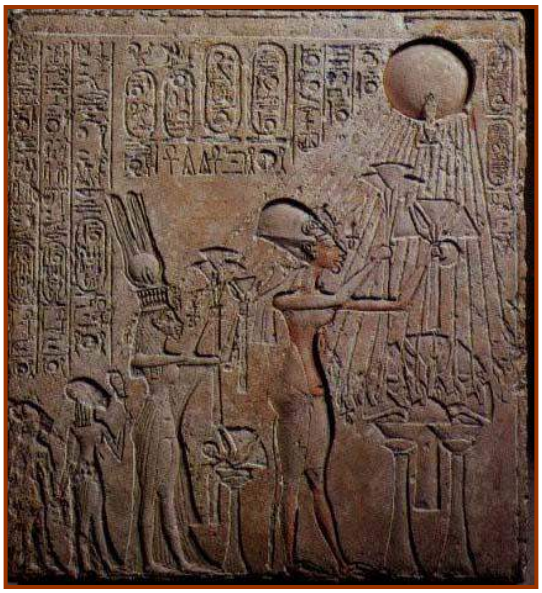


Fig.13.Relief illustrating Nefertiti's central role in the Aten cult
(http://www.lost-civilizations.net/images/egypt/akhnaton5.gif

Due to the abolishment of the traditional deities, the focus on the Aten and the embodiment thereof in Akhenaten, the belief in and depiction of the afterlife in art ceased to exist during the reign of Akhenaten (Robins 1997:150-151). Robins (1997:150-151) noted that unlike in traditional royal tombs which depicted the sun on its journey through the underworld, tombs in the Amarna Period portrayed the royal family worshipping the Aten and mourning the deceased (Ikram & Dodson 1998:40). Ikram and Dodson (1998:40) also note that on the pharaoh's sarcophagus the four traditional tutelary divinities were replaced by illustrations of Nefertiti whilst the customary deities associated with burials were substituted by the Aten. Non-royal tombs also focused on the king and showed Akhenaten with loyal soldiers bowing before him, and sometimes Nefertiti, in adoration as they passed by (Robins 1997:150-151).

Fig.14. Two courtiers bowing behind Nefertiti – 22.5cm (Roehrig & Hill 1992:27)

Overall the Aten, Akhenaten and to a lesser degree the royal family were omnipresent in Amarna reliefs, palace murals, stelae and other arts (Robins 1997:152-154). On most works of art in the Amarna period Akhenaten can be seen below the sun disk while making his offerings. However, although the Aten was the core of most pieces of art, Akhenaten dominated the piece as he was larger than any other figure depicted. This was distinctly different from traditional art which always depicted the king and the deities on equal footing.

Fig.15. Foreigner courtiers bowing for Akhenaten (http://www.sofiatopia.org/maat/iethnics.jpg)

Reader to note that even though the period during Akhenaten's reign is often seen as an interlude of monotheism, some scholars debate that it should rather be seen as a period of henotheism wherein the Aten was only temporarily elevated above the other traditional deities such as Maat, Refnut and Shu (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52-53). Wilkinson concurs with Brewer and Teeter (2007) in that the Akhenaten's relationship with other deities was multifaceted (Wilkinson 2003:236-239). Kemp (Winter 2010:2-3) also highlights that although it was not prominent, the practice of worshipping conventional deities continued to exist in ordinary Egyptians' private lives. Wilkinson (2003:236-239) also notes that Akhenaten allowed for various manifestations of the Aten to occur as was found in the tomb for the Mnevis bull at Amarna. Other evidence found in the Workmen's Village includes a flint pebble which showed an image of the sun, voyaging in its boat, something that Akhenaten did not endorse (Kemp Summer 2011:11). Also, three scaraboid beads made out of faience steatite, show the gods Bes and Taweret (Kemp Spring 2010:3) whilst a pottery vessel show the goddess Hathor (Kemp September 2006:3). Kemp (Winter 2010:2-3) also indicates that at Abydos reliefs showed that Osiris were not attacked as instructed by Akhenaten but rather depicted Osiris laying within the supposed tomb of Osiris.

Fig.16. Goddess Hathor – pottery vessel (Kemp September 2006:3)

Fig.17. Scaraboid beds depicting the gods Bes and Tawaret (Kemp Winter 2010:3)

More evidence of adoration of traditional gods comes from a discovery at the Workmen's Village made by T.E. Peet in 1921 (Kemp February 2008:5). Prayers were addressed to Amun Ra and Amun, however, Kemp cautions that this practice might have taken place in the short period following Akehnaten's death which was characterized by the abolishment of the Aten cult and the abandonment of Amarna. Kemp also noted that rather than focusing on Akhenaten and the royal family in individuals' private chapels, there was evidence of a chapel owner and his wife being depicted on the walls of their own building. Lastly, Kemp stated that on the wall of one of the rooms of a private house on the main street in Amarna the procession of figures of the god Bes is depicted.

Fig.18. Shrine depicting a vulture holding ostrich-feather fans (Kemp February 2008:5)

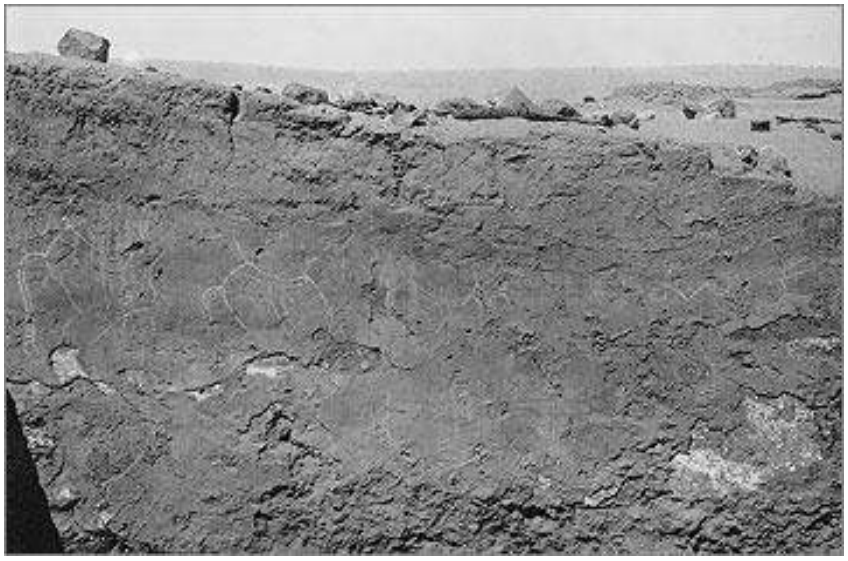


Fig.19. Wall of house on Main Street depicting procession of god Bes (1921 photograph) (http://www.amarnaproject.com/images/amarna_the_place/workmans_village/11.jpg)

Although the presence of monotheism in during the reign of Akhenaten is vast, Kemp (Winter 2010:2-3) and Wilkinson (2003:240-241) feel that it could not be assumed that ordinary Egyptians accepted Akhenaten's changes. Evidence found at the South Tombs cemetery indicate the non-royal individuals found unique ways to express themselves and somehow, albeit covertly, continued worshipping a variety of customary gods and that a return to the traditional mindset away from Akhenaten's religious revolution was unavoidable. Kemp also stated that Akhenaten might have provided civilians with a more simplified way to view the chaotic and ordered forces that supposedly ruled the universe and ultimately could have provided Egyptians with a way to understand their spirituality (Kemp September 2006:2).

6.2.1. Focus on the king and the royal family

The extreme focus on the Aten and Akhenaten resulted in a drastic change from customary Egyptian art as the Aten, Akhenaten and the royal family infiltrated every aspect of non-royal Egyptians' lives (Kuhrt 1997:199; Stevens 2006:5-6). The pharaoh and his god became the core of all decoration during the Amarna Period whilst Nefertiti, contrary to traditional Egyptian religion, assumed the role of intermediary between the

new god Aten and the Egyptian populace (Robins 1997:150-151; Stevens 2006:5-6). For instance, traditional murals in private tombs depicting the owner of the tomb in every day activities such as hunting and fishing were now replaced by officials subjugating themselves before Akhenaten (Kuhrt 1997:199; Robins 1997:150-151). The emphasis on the Aten and Akhenaten was also evident in the Amarna boundary stelae which were whittled into the rocks on the edge of his city (Frankfort 1958:159; Kemp September 2006:7).

6.2.2. Devotion to family and children

Fig.20. Limestone relief of Akhenaten and the royal family in a warm and intimate scene (http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rgrosser/amarna/ampb7g.gif)

Not only did the focus on the Aten lead to an increased focus on the royal family, it also resulted in an increased depiction of intimacy, warmth and devotion between members of the royal family to the extent that Akhenaten has been referred to by James Henry Breasted as the "…first individual in history" (Brewer & Teeter 2007:205; De Garis Davies 1921:21; Schlögl (2005). This did not just occur in the living space of the royals but also in those of the populace (De Garis Davies 1921:5). For instance, one relief shows the king and queen with the princesses on their laps whilst they provide their daughters with gifts whilst Nefertiti filled Akhenaten's cup and also handed him a flower (De Garis

Davies 1921:5). Roehrig and Hill (1992:27) noted that this type of intimacy was unheard of in traditional Egyptian art. Another example of the close bond between Akhenaten and Nefertiti is found on a painted limestone model wherein Nefertiti offering flowers to Akhenaten (Tiradritti (2002:79). Also, a painted limestone with Akhenaten and Nefertiti holding hands which appeared in the naturalistic Later Phase of Amarna art, shows Akhenaten's devotion to this wife (Silverman 1997:128). Not only do the individual figures appear relaxed but the relaxed flow of the pharaoh's robe is prominent and contributes to the warmness depicted in this work of art.

Fig.21.Limestone relief of Nefertiti kissing her daughter. (22.2 x 3.4 x 44.5 cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/60.197.8_PS1.jpg)

Fig.22. Painted limestone sculpture of Akhenaten and Nefertiti (Tiradritti 2002:78)

Fig.23. Unfinished sculpture: Akhenaten kissing his daughter (Frankfort 1958:159)

Fig.24. Nefertiti giving flowers to Akhenaten
(http://www.crystalinks.com/akhenatenef.jpg)

A sunken relief also clearly depicts the natural and casual relationship between the pharaoh and the queen (Kemp Winter 2010:2). However, reader to note that although this relief shows figures from the Amarna Period, whether it depicts Akhenaten and Nefertiti is uncertain. The artist succeeded in depicting the couple in such a relaxed and intimate manner that the figures appear slouched in their seats, a posture very eccentric when compared to traditional Egyptian art. The viewer can clearly see how the figures are embracing.

Fig.24. Royal couple embracing each other
(http://nefertiti-immortal-queen.com/images/2_Pharaohs_sm.gif)

6.3. Overall depiction of realism instead of idealism

Already during the reign of Akhenaten's father Amenhotep III did Egyptian artists start portraying human figures as well as nature to a level unseen in traditional Egyptian art (Brewer & Teeter 2007:205-206; Freed 2001). As a result there was a drastic increase in the detailed illustration of nature, such as showing animals playing in the field, facial features, informal scenes depicting the royal family as well as normal day-to-day activities in Egypt. Brewer and Teeter (2007:206), however, indicate to be cautious in assuming that the natural display of the royal family was realistic as the inconsistencies of the various portrayals of the family strongly suggest that this informal emphasis on Akhenaten, his wife and their children was purely for artistic purposes and was motivated by Akhenaten's religious revolution.

6.3.1. Realistic depiction of human figures

In contrast to traditional Egyptian art, Amarna artists always aimed to portray human figures as realistic as possible. De Garis Davies (1921:4) illustrates how the relief of Akhenaten's two daughters clearly depicts their collarbones, dimple on their cheeks as well as the creases in the skins of their elbows, neck and overall bodies. This relief shows how the princesses share a very private and tender moment with one princess brushing the other's hair aside (Dorman 1986:6-7).

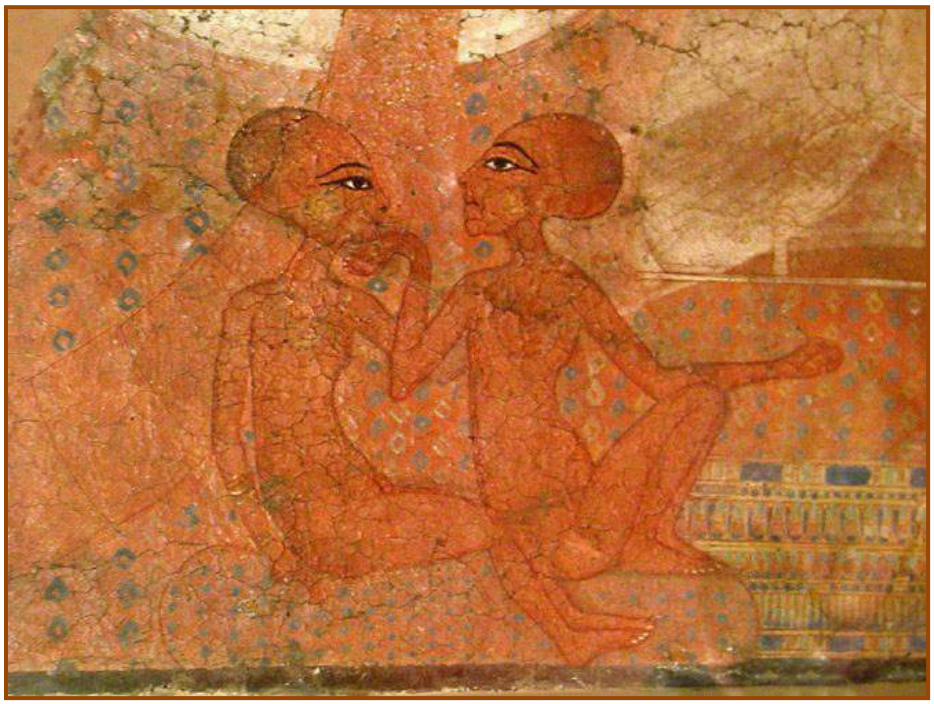


Fig.25. Akhenaten's two daughters
(http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/07/Painting_of_Akhenaten's_daughters.jpg)

Dorman (1986:6-7) also notes that there is a clear trusting upwards glance from one sister to another which was accompanied by a tender touch on the shoulder. Also, one princess's swelling breast is clearly depicted whilst the characteristics of Amarna art, namely the extended skulls and weak physical attributes. It is clear that the artist also wanted to capture the essence of the moment as he depicted the details of the pillows under the bodies of the princesses (Frankfort 1958:158). Furthermore, in this relief we not only see a black line separating the upper and lower lips, but also the distinct marking of the toes and toenails as well as the flattening of the foot arch which is a major

improvement from depicting detail in traditional Egyptian art. Also, Frankfort (1958:158-159) highlights that although this display of royal private life is improper it provides a sense of kindness unseen in any other Egyptian eras. The fascination with depicting realism is also evident in the relief of 'Foreigners in a procession' (Dorman 1986:7).

Fig.26. Foreigners in a procession
(http://realhistoryww.com/world_history/ancient/Misc/Common/Egypt/Foreigners_in_a_Procession_new_kingdom.jpg)

In this relief one can observe and even experience the atmosphere in the procession. The figures in the procession show detailed depiction of hair as well as facial modeling, and together with their marching forward with their arms hoisted above their heads, the relief creates a remarkable sense of intensity and depth. The most remarkable realistic depiction of Egyptian naturalism is seen in the Amarna gypsum sculptures and statues in the Great Palace (Kemp 2008:6). The gypsum portraits reached a pinnacle in Egyptian history as it depicted the expression on Egyptians' faces whilst the Great Palace statues clearly show the details of the statues' feet.

Fig.27. Big toe from statue at Great Palace; yellowish foot from smaller statue (Kemp February 2008:6)

However, the most famous is the head of Nefertiti in Berlin depicting probably one of the most beautiful women in Egyptian history (Kemp 2007:10). This painted stone bust was discovered at Amarna in an artitst's workshop (Silverman 1997:89). However, the extent of the realism is debatable, but this bust is a far cry from the Early Period depiction of grotesque physical characteristics.

Fig.28. Bust of Akhenaten's wife, Nefertiti
(http://ancientweb.org/images/explore/Egypt_Bust_of_Nefertiti.jpg)
Fig.29. Amarna gypsum portrait
(http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1300/684299344_837d743388.jpg)

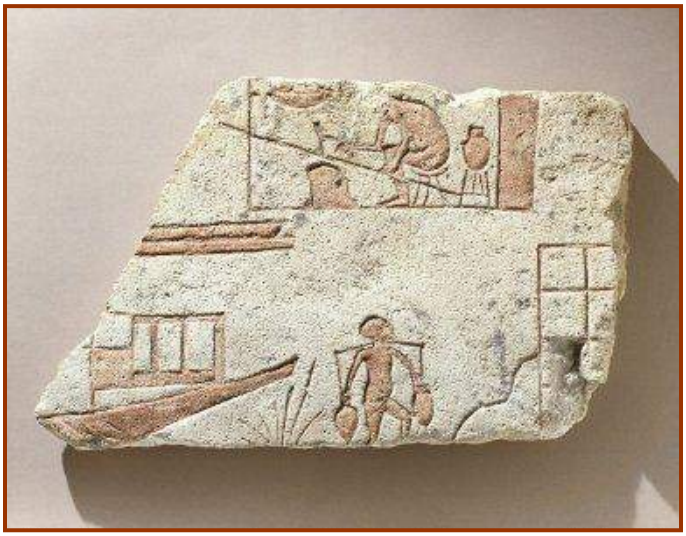


Fig.30. Fragmentary Slab 'Riverside Scene' (limestone, painted, 23.5 x 38.1 x 4.3cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/65.16_SL1.jpg)

During the Amarna Period people were often depicted in detail in everyday activities. For instance, the 'Riverside Scene' fragmentary slab depicts a boat which is anchored along the Nile while a farmer carries two jars suspended from a pole (www.brooklynmuseum.org). The farmer climbs the steep riverbank aiming to reach the irrigated field. The top right corner also shows a shipbuilder working with a wooden plank. Additionally, the 'Kitchen Scene' shows bakeries on the right of the slab together with a royal brewery (www.brooklynmuseum.org). Two men at the centre of the relief carry a wine pot which hangs from a pole. It is interesting to note the detail of the little cabinet which contains five pairs of sandals together with a domestic workman cleaning the floor with a brush, most probably made out of straw.

Fig.31. Kitchen Scene limestone relief (21.5 x 54 cm)
(http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/AmarnaRelief-KitchenScene_BrooklynMuseum.png)

6.3.2. Realistic illustration of nature

A variety of natural elements have been displayed in the Amarna Period. For instance, an architectural temple relief shows how Akhenaten clutches a branch of an olive tree covered in fruit whilst the rays of the Aten stream down onto the plant (Russman & Dorman 1982:6).

Fig.32. Relief of Akhenaten holding an olive branch – limestone, painted (23 x 45cm)

(http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/eg/web-large/DT8197.jpg)

Fig.33. Akhenaten offering a duck to the Aten – painted limestone (24.5x54.5x7cm)

(http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/eg/web-large/DT545.jpg)

Fig.34. Two chariot horses – painted limestone (22.9x52.1x3.8cm)

(http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/eg/web-large/DT8203.jpg)

The artist was successful in illustrating the weight of the olives as it pulled down the branch whilst Akhenaten's flexible hand took hold of the fruit. In contrast to conventional offering scenes wherein the Aten's rays shine onto the table loaded with food, the Aten's rays now shine directly over Akhenaten. Another relief depicts Akhenaten offering a duck to the Aten whilst depicting his hand in a realistic manner whilst other reliefs show how a horse scratches its leg and how barley is blown in a gentle breeze (Roehrig & Hill 1992:25,32).

Fig.35. Ripe Barley (23x52x4cm)
(http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/eg/web-large/DT1014.jpg)

Fig.36. Tomb of Sennedjem, Amarna
(http://www.bible-archaeology.info/Tomb-of-SennedjemAmarna.jpg)

Depiction of nature played a significant role in the decoration of walls in the North Palace as well as numerous tombs and provides us with the most breathtaking murals ever found in ancient Egypt (Frankfort 1927:232-235). The tomb of Sennedjem at Deir el-Medina depicts a harvesting scene and clearly shows the various phases of the process, such as cutting the grain with a sickle, tying the stalks as well as transporting the harvested crops and ending the activity with a prayer ritual. All these characteristics, unique to Amarna art, show that artists during the Amarna period had more freedom to express their creativity (Frankfort 1958:158-159).

6.4. Caricatured portrayal of physical characteristics

How did Egyptian artists depict figures in the Amarna period? Overall, Amarna artists were encouraged and taught by Akhenaten to portray volume, fluidity and shape in their work whilst simultaneously emphasizing physical imperfections of the human body (Frankfort 1958:159; Kuhrt 1997:199). As a result, they did not aim to create an idealized version of human bodies as was expected in traditional Egyptian art but depicted human bodies in a more realistic and often even odd manner which was at its most excessive in that of the pharaoh. The king was depicted with a large head with narrow and oval eyes together with heavy upper lids and an absence of lower eyelids (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52; Kuhrt 1997:199; Teeter 1994:21). Akhenaten was also shown with full lips, down-turned edged of the mouth and a drooping chin as well as an overhanging chin which projected back to his stretched out head. Dissimilar to dynasties prior to the Amarna period, the king's waist and shoulders were narrow and his thighs curvy, portraying a fleshy and feminine body, contrary to the rugged and physically controlling manner in which male figures were always depicted (Brewer & Teeter 2007:205).

Fig.37. Sandstone pillar depicting Akhenaten's overhanging chin and curvy thighs
http://www.utexas.edu/courses/classicalarch/images1/Akhenatensculpt.jpg)

Why was Akhenaten depicted in this fashion? Robins (1997:150-151) proposed that his fat appearance was thought to be representative of the affluence that the Aten has brought to Egypt whilst Brewer & Teeter (2007:52) suggest that depicting Akhenaten in such a way associated him with Hapy, the Nile flood, which was traditionally illustrated as an obese figure. Frankfort (1958:157) and Robins 91997:150-151) also noted that radically different from the customary portrayal of pharaohs, Akhenaten also appeared tired; his stomach hung over the waistband of his kilt; his legs and arms appeared weak and thin and altogether lacked any masculine features.

6.5. Speculation of Akhenaten's homosexuality

The way Akhenaten was depicted often made scholars ponder whether the pharaoh was homosexual or androgynous (Brewer & Teeter 2007:206; Kuhrt 1997:201; Robins 1997:150-151). For instance, a statue of Akhenaten clearly shows his plump and round breast, something very unconventional for depicting a male figure.

Fig.38. Breast from a granite statue of Akhenaten (ca.135201336 BCE) (6x16 x19cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size3/16.580.89_PS2.jpg)

Also, in a very intimate scene between two kings, possibly Akhenaten and Smenkhkare, there is increased speculation that Akhenaten was in fact homosexual. Why did Akhenaten allow himself to be depicted in such a way? It has been proposed that Akhenaten, the creater god and the Aten's manifestation on earth, wanted to portray male as well as female elements in his images, such as 'mother and father' of the Egyptian state, whereby his close affinity with the Aten was emphasised (Kuhrt 1997:200; Robins 1997:150-151). Kuhrt (1997:201) also highlighted that it was important for Akhenaten to be represented as non-gendered in order for all to regard him as the 'father and mother' of the Egyptians.

Others proposed that it was purely a new expressionistic style that emerged or that it was either Froelich's Syndrome, evident in the feminine feature brought on by an endocrine disorder found in men, Gigantism, or Marfan's Syndrome, seen in the long fingers and emaciated oddities, that Akhenaten suffered from and which caused his strange appearance (Kuhrt 1997:200). There is however a strong likelihood that there was absolutely nothing wrong with Akhenaten and that this innovative style in Egyptian art was purely Akhenaten's way of making a sacred statement.

Fig.39. Akhenaten and possibly Smenkhkare in an intimate scenario

(http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/arts/scultpureplastic/SculptureHistory/ArtofEgypt/ArtAmarnaPeriod/akhsmenk.gif)

Fig.40. Statue of an Amarna queen or princess – the female form is accentuated with the figure bursting out of the delicate robe (height 52cm)

((http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/bolton/images/bolton_museum_1003.jpg)

6.6. Portrayal of male versus female figures

Although Akhenaten was depicted in a very effeminate way, artists often distinguished between male and female figures (Robins 1997:150-151). Females were depicted with transparent dresses, exposing the genitalia area, thighs as well as stomach and highlighting the female form. Robins (1997:151) however notes that this approach to depict female figures was not unique to the Amarna period, although it was more radical, as traditionally artists aimed to outline the shape of the female body and to emphasise female fertility.

6.7. Representation of royal versus non-royal figures

It was, however, in two-dimensional art in which artists differentiated between the king and non-royals. The royal family was shown with near and far feet whilst non-royal individuals were depicted with both feet portrayed from the inside (Robins 1997:150-151). Additionally, commoners were depicted with two left or two right feet whilst royalty were shown with left and right feet, each with a big toe.

6.8. Extraordinary sense of movement

In Amarna art one of the most radical changes from traditional Egyptian art is found in the increased depiction of movement and use of figurative space (Dorman 1986:6-7; Tiradritti 2002:78). For instance, 'The act of worship' limestone relief, highlighting the casual relationship between Akhenaten and the Aten, shows how Akhenaten drops a liquid, perhaps fat, on top of an offering table (Dorman 1986:6-7). However, the relief shows that the fat remains midair whilst falling to the table and together with the detailed joints of the forefinger and thumb it shows the relaxed relationship between the pharaoh and the god, something very unorthodox for Egyptian art (Dorman 1986:6-7).

Fig.41. An act of worship (23.8 x 27.9 x 3.6cm) (http://www.uned.es/geo-1-historia-antigua-universal/NOTICIAS/ex_hi_06c_04.jpg)

Movement is also evident in the relief of Akhenaten's daughter playing a lute whilst floating in a boat on the Nile. This relief noticeably shows how the princess's right hand plucks the cords at the same time as when her slender fingers of her left hand put pressure on the strings. Other striking reliefs, such as the 'bowing figures' and the 'chariot drawn by horses', show how Amarna artists implied movement. The 'chariot drawn by horses' artists not only relied on lifting the horses' forelegs off the ground, which was the traditional way to depict a gallop, but they also allowed for space, sometimes as large as half of the block that they worked on, to portray the area into which the chariot was moving. What is also unconventional in this relief is that one horse, rather than being portrayed in profile, is staring directly at the viewer.

Fig.42. Princess playing the lute (limestone relief)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size3/60.197.9_negA_bw_IMLS.jpg)

Fig.43. Soldiers in chariot (53.5 x 22.8 x 3.2cm)
(http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3683/Soldiers_in_Chariot/set/?referring-q=amarna)
Fig.44. Relief of bowing figures
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/54.188.5_transpc002.jpg)

6.9. Amplified inspiration and creativity

Together with the unique characteristics of Amarna Art, it is also important to note that during this Akhenaten's reign creativity reached a level never seen before in traditional Egyptian art and is especially evident in personal jewellery and toys, pottery as well as the overall decoration of buildings (Kemp 2006:2; Romano in Sasson 2004:1605-1612).

Personal art, such as jewellery, became very elaborate and also appeared in larger numbers than ever seen before (Romano in Sasson 2004:1612-1614). Especially at the end of Akhenaten's reign, Egyptians came to appreciate flamboyant and complex pieces. For instance, women as well as men wore earrings made of a variety of materials, such as shell, calcite, gold and carnelian together with jasper, bone and faience. The earrings were also decorated with gold or silver.

Fig.45.Gold ear plug illustrating high standard of gold work (http://www.akhet.co.uk/graphics/earplug.jpg)

Fig.46.Gold ring bearing the cartouche of queen Nefertiti (http://www.akhet.co.uk/graphics/ring.jpg)

Fig.48.Signet ring inscribed for Akhenaten

(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/CUR.33.681_erg456.jpg)

An abundance of blue or green shiny faience rings and amulets, engraved with the names of Akhenaten, were also mass produced during the Amarna Period (Romano in Sasson 2004:1612-1614). Mirrors were also common practical objects in Amarna Period (Kemp, Autumn 2009:2-3).

Fig.47. Faience throwstick of Akhenaten

(http://www.perankhgroup.com/ps318808.jpg)

Fig.48. A turquoise faience ring, Amarna Period

(http://www.ancientresource.com/images/egyptian/amarna/amarna-ring-0610066.jpg)

Fig.49. Earrings, Amarna Period (2.5cm)

(http://www.objects-for-eternity.com/admin/objects/img105.jpg)

Fig.50. Terracotta amulets to fit on an offering-jar, Amarna Period (26 mm)

(http://www.ancientresource.com/images/egyptian/amarna/amarnamold-fruit-2741b.jpg)

Fig.51. Mirror with handle in the form of a woman (15.5 x 14.2 x 2.6cm)

(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size3/25.886.1_back_PS2.jpg)

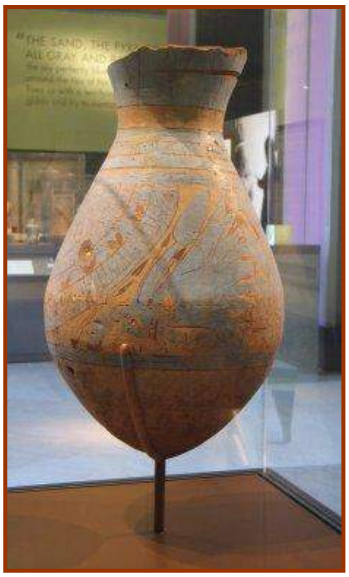
Creativity also spread to collars and necklaces which were decorated with beads made out of carnelian, gold alloy and blue glass (Kemp Autumn 2009:3). These pieces of art often emulated lotus as well as date-palms, cornflowers to indicate rejuvenation; a pregnant hippopotamus to symbolize the protection of pregnant women as well as frogs which signified rebirth (Romano in Sasson 2004:1605-1612).

Fig.52. Fragmentary faience necklace (Length between amulets is 8.6 cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/35.2023_PS2.jpg)

Fig.53. Toy: blue faience monkey (5.4 x 2.8cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/48.181_PS2.jpg)

Sophisticated pastel blue polychrome pottery, in contrast to traditional monochrome designs, also thrived during the reign of Akhenaten (Romano in Sasson 2004:1613-1614). Artists showed increased creativity in the complexity of their designs and this was evident in the design of vessels, pots, bowls, ostraca as well as vases.

Vases and bottles in the form of people holding pets or babies as well as zoomorphic depictions were mass produced. Milk jugs often depicted the female form, such as the breasts and arms of a woman, whilst luxury ware features the head of an ibex or a gazelle. Artists also used sticks on glass vessels to create sophisticated and rippled designs and effects (www.brooklynmusuem.org). Furthermore, during the Eighteenth Dynasty artists mastered the engraving of metalwork which consisted of electrum, iron lead as well as gold, copper, bronze and silver (Romano in Sasson 2004:1615-1618). Romano also notes that artist became increasingly creative with designing motifs such as producing handles on containers.



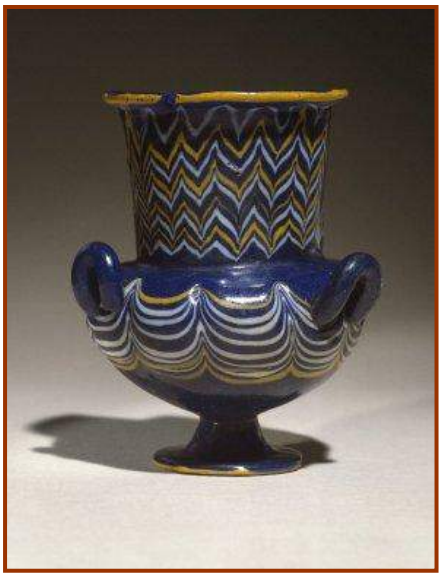


Fig.54.Grain storage jar with blue-painted lotus plants and floral collar (70 x 39.7cm)

(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/CUR.16.245_erg456.jpg)

Fig.55.Glass vase with three handles (8.7 x 6.5 cm)

(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/37.340E_SL1.jpg)

Creativity in the decoration of royal buildings and the depiction of idyllic scenes also reached new heights during Akhenaten's reign as artists intended to depict nature as realistically and colourful as possible (www.brooklynmuseum.org). For instance, this is evident in the grape clusters and lotus flowers that were omnipresent in the royal palace.

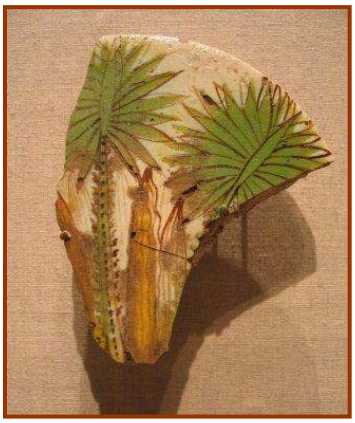


Fig.56.Faience tile with floral inlays (11.1 x 0.7 x 16.5cm)

(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/35.2001_SL1.jpg)

Fig.57.Glazed faience tile with palms (10.8 x 9.2cm)

(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/CUR.52.148.1_wwg7.jpg)

Fig.58. Bunch of faience conventionalized grapes (4.7 x 7.3cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/CUR.16.362_wwg7.jpg)
Fig.59. Faience lotus inlay (6.3 x 5cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/CUR.49.8_wwg7.jpg)
Fig.60 Fragment of faience cornice in a private home (4.8 x 4.6cm)
(http://cdn.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/images/objects/size2/CUR.34.6046_37.718E_erg456.jpg)

In contrast to royal buildings and quite surprisingly, the walls of Amarna houses showed very little evidence of decoration and appeared to only be unpainted mud plaster (Kemp September 2008:8). Colour was reserved for the ceiling area. The house of Ranefer shows white walls which were painted a brownish colour whilst colourful lotus petals decorated the ceiling. Kemp (2008:8) provides a reconstruction of the red-painted doors, lotus frieze and the garland with swooping ducks.

Fig.61. Reconstruction of lotus frieze, garland and red coloured doors in a private home (Kemp September 2008:8)

7. The end of Akhenaten

Art produced during the reign of Akhenaten clearly indicates that the king was completely dedicated to the Aten and the administration thereof (Kemp September 2006:2). Amarna art also shows that Akhenaten's reign and artistic rebellion was marked by a dimension of creativity unheard of and that his impact on Egyptian history was gigantic and revolutionary (Brewer & Teeter 2007:52; Kemp September 2006:2; Shaw 2000:279).

Unfortunately not only will it forever be remembered as the most heretical event in ancient Egyptian history, it is also a phase in Egyptian history that left a blemish on the Egyptian economy and people's collective consciousness (Brewer & Teeter 2007:53-54). People had to pay taxes to have evidence of the heretic royal couple removed and also had to form part of the architectural restitution that swept the entire Egyptian community. Within that context it is safe to say that the Egyptian people felt anxious and demoralised and for once in Egyptian history the people did not care to protect the king's status after his death and wanted to forget about Akhenaten and Nefertiti as a matter of urgency (Hari 1985:16-17; Shaw 2000:92; Schlögel 2005).

As a result, seven years following the death of Akhenaten, drastic changes took place in the Egyptian community (Brewer & Teeter 2007:54; Frankfort 1958:165; Hari 1985:16-17; Robins 1997:165; Schlögel 2005). To begin with, Egyptians supported the state-sponsored disfigurement of Akhenaten’s statues as well as the demolition of all Aten temples (Frankfort 1958:165; Silverman 1997:144). The city of Akhetaten, including the royal palaces, was rapidly destroyed and abandoned and the building materials were used to construct other temples dedicated to the Amun (Brewer & Teeter 2007:53-54). Ironically, just as Akhenaten ordered the removal of all traditional deities during his reign, after his death Egyptians attempted all possible ways to erase all evidence of the Aten, Akhenaten and Nefertiti's profanation (Frankfort 1958:165). The extent of the revulsion against Akhenaten and the relief of leaving his legacy in the past can be seen in a triumphant phrase in the Amen hymn (Frankfort 1958:165):

"Thy city, O Amon, persist
but he who attacked thee lies below;
the shrine of him who
assaulted three lies in darkness"

The administrative centre was also reinstated in Thebes and Egyptian society returned to worshipping their traditional deities. Lastly, and somehow regrettably, the death of Akhenaten was accompanied by an end to the profusion of creativity and bizarreness in art that was characteristic of the Amarna Period (Hari 1985:16-17). Robins (1997:165) however indicates that certain elements of Akhenaten's heresy continued to exist following his demise. For instance, although abandoning the short lower leg characteristic of Amarna art, non-royal figures depicted in private tombs at Saqqara continued to be portrayed with slender limbs as well as a higher small of the back. This illustration of human figures continued to be used until the end of the New Kingdom.

In order to emphasise the importance of reverting to the traditional norms and values, the new king Tutankhaten altered his name to be known as Tutankhamun, the 'Living Image of Amun' (Brewer & Teeter 2007:54). Akhenaten's former general King Horemheb also restored the traditional order by dating his accession to the throne as prior to Akhenaten's reign (Silverman 1997:152). Furthermore, and perhaps the biggest offense to Akhenaten, was his removal from all king-lists and Egyptians' referring to the heretic king as 'the Enemy' (Frankfort 1958:152; Kuhrt 1997:187; Silverman 1997:152).

The exact reasons for this sudden reversal in Egyptian mindset is difficult to understand however there is speculation that either Nefertiti passed away or there was a rift between the royal pair (Hari 1985:16-17). Another theory suggests that it was the ingrained belief that individuals after death would traverse to the afterlife, and the absence thereof during the Amarna Period, that resulted in Egyptians reverting back to a sense of comfort and security following Akhenaten's death (Brewer & Teeter 2007:53). Another speculation is that the established conservative mindset of the Egyptian people might have found it difficult to see a royal couple that is elevated to divine status (Brewer & Teeter 2007:105).

8. Conclusion

The discussion above indicates that there are a number of traditional standards, albeit with slight modifications, which artists during the Amarna period continued to adhere to. As an example, Amarna artists continued to use the materials and colours that traditional artists have used for millennia. The use of frontality in three-dimensional statues also continued. Moreover, artists carried on portraying nature and the environment as realistically as possible. They also continued emphasising the importance of the king and maintained using the grid system in the design of their works of art. There are, however, traits in Amarna art that are very different to the standards used by traditional Egyptian art. At first the extreme focus on frontality in two-dimensional works of art diminished as artists freely portrayed movement and twisting of body parts. Additionally the core focus on the god(s) was diminished as the attention shifted to the king and the royal family. The most radical differences yet when compared to customary Egyptian art could be found in two traits, namely the realistic depiction of human figures and the display of emotion and intimacy.

What did Akhenaten's artistic revolution signify? Stevens (2006:5) notes that Amarna art was driven by religious forces and believes that it was merely a society in which one god was elevated above others. The Aten obtained universal status and as a result Atenism became the core of all existence for Egyptians during the Eighteenth Dynasty. Robins (1997:165) also feel that Amarna art was not an act purely striving to depict realism but rather an expression of omnipresent spiritual beliefs. For instance, Robins (1997:165) feels that rather than depicting a malformed family with stretched out heads, the elongated heads represented the act of rebirth.

Brewer and Teeter (2007:53) on the other hand feel that due to the exposure to foreign ideas and goods the mindset during the last part of the Fourteenth century BCE, as shown in the Amarna Letters, was characterized by a decreased focus on military operations and an increased sense of freedom of creativity. This might have had a positive influence on the imaginative and eccentric Akhenaten and his artistic ideas were mainly just adhering to the status quo characteristic of this period (Brewer & Teeter 2007:51; Shaw 2000:266).

Frankfort (1958:159) and Robins (1997:165) take it one step further and postulate that Akhenaten's radical change in Egyptian society could not have been driven by a passionate need for artistic expression. Rather, as everything that Akhenaten did was against the grain of Egyptian beliefs, perhaps his religious and artistic revolt was driven by an illness or even Akhenaten's bizarre and perhaps grandiose personality. Additionally, Amarna art was portrayed in such a clumsy and forced manner that it makes it even more difficult to believe that Akhenaten had a creative impulse that he needed to satisfy (Frankfort 1958:159). Frankfort suggests that Akhenaten was perhaps a rebellion who experienced a moment of disorientation and used his power to ensure that everyone carried out his imperial commands. Hari (1958:18) on the other hand proposes that due to the nature of the religious beliefs during Akhenaten's reign, which was characterized by a vivacity that strongly contrasted with the old-fashioned, static and refined traditional art, the Amarna artistic expressions could only be portrayed in a naturalistic and real manner. Some authors feel that Akhenaten went too far in his artistic expressions of human features and even imperfections and also the illustration of intimacy between the royal family (Hari 1958:18). For instance, never before in ancient Egyptian history have royals had the need to be open and honest with the populace. The warm, friendly and humane way in which Akhenaten and his family were represented in the abundance of works of art gave the sense that the king wanted to have no secrets from his people. The reason for this blatant display of compassion is a mystery and it will be clouded in obscurity for a very long time.

Looking at the reliefs, murals as well as statues and personal art produced during the Amarna Period it shows that in contrast to the conceptual art produced during the length of ancient Egyptian history, art during this phase was remarkably perceptual. Never before have individuals been so drawn into Egyptian art. Amarna art allows the observer to explore a work of art from different dimensions; it permits the viewer to interpret what the work of art means and provides the person with an opportunity to explore and appreciate the details which were displayed by each masterpiece. In essence, it allows the viewer to make the piece his or her own. Amarna art shows that art produced during Akhenaten's reign made such a significant impact on ancient Egyptian history that it will continue to intrigue scholars for a very long time (Hari 1958:18).

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