

10-week course:

Art in Roman Egypt: Ancient Faces and Beautiful Burials - The Junction, Friends Centre, Brighton

Mondays 10.30am to 12.30pm starting 19 September 2011

We examine the intersection of two cultures, Greek and Egyptian, through their art, which was specific to a particular time and place – namely, Egypt from just before the Roman conquest (circa mid-first century BC) to the early Byzantine era at the end of the third century AD. In particular, we shall focus on the combination of Greek and Egyptian art forms in funerary practices. This art has often been overlooked or dismissed as crude, anomalous or just plain eccentric. However, by examining these artworks within their archaeological and cultural contexts, we can gain valuable insights into the intentions, working practices and inventions of the artisans who created them. The co-existence of two representational systems in a single work of art can provide coded expressions of cultural identity. How something or someone is represented can be as important as who or what is represented. In other words, the form itself is a vehicle of communication.

These artworks occur in a variety of media and a range of material beyond the now famous Fayum mummy portraits and include masks, coffins, reliefs and various funerary equipment and furniture. Close scrutiny of the art and texts from burials can reveal many details about individuals' lives and deaths, from their names, professions and family relationships to the roles of age, gender and status within the social structure.

The course begins by establishing the historical and cultural context and will seek to answer the question: What was Roman Egypt like - politically, ethnically and culturally? We will examine their religion and funerary practices before focusing on the artworks. Particular attention will be paid to the wonderful Fayum coffin portraits.

Contact: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cce/prospectivestudents/shortcourses/x90293>