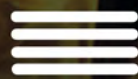
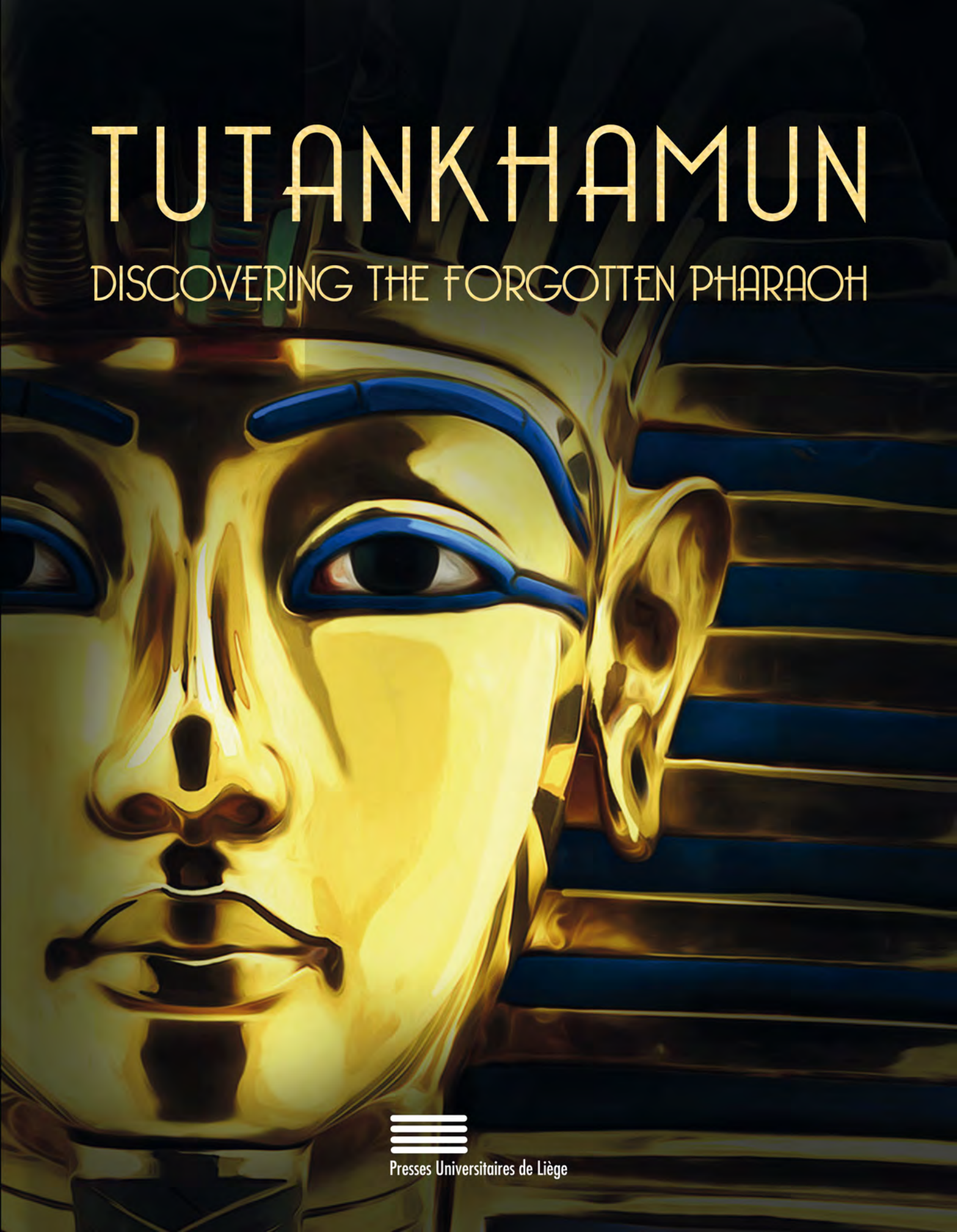


TUTANKHAMUN

DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH



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TUTANKHAMUN
DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH

Catalogue edited by

Simon CONNOR and Dimitri LABOURY

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Jean-Lou Stefan

The anonymous private collectors who entrusted us with their pieces.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Agostinho da Cunha, untimely seized by the Abductor, as ancient Egyptians called it.

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Amarna or the King's Childhood

Dimitri LABOURY

The Workshop of the Sculptor Thutmose: “In the Studio of an Artist”

Although the British Egyptologist Julia Samson suggested that Petrie, during his archaeological exploration of the site of Amarna with the young Howard Carter in 1891–1892, had perhaps located, without realizing it, the famous workshop of the royal sculptor at the court of Akhenaten, Thutmose, it was to Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938) and his team from the Deutsche Orient Gesellschaft that we owe the discovery and careful exploration, twenty-one years later in 1912–3, of this site of exceptional importance for the history of art. Furthermore, the site revealed one of the most famous masterpieces of ancient art, a true modern icon of Egypt of the pharaohs: the bust of Nefertiti, now preserved in the Neues Museum in Berlin. The discovery of workplaces of ancient artists is quite rare and, as Jean Capart insisted in an article entitled “In the studio of an artist” (*Dans le studio*

d’un artiste), the complex of the sculptor Thutmose, through its extraordinary archaeological richness, allows us to “enter into communication with the soul of the artist,” as if we still saw him before our eyes working and living, despite the millennia that separate us from him.

The site in question can be attributed to the “the favorite of the perfect god (= the king), the chief of works and sculptor, Thutmose,” thanks to a horse’s blinder that still had a sufficiently legible part of his name and titles. The complex of this royal artist consists of a patrician house (in the archaeological nomenclature of L. Borchardt, house P.47.2), around which was organized a real small business, a kind of “Small and Medium-sized Enterprise” (SME) of the time. Thutmose had there his assistant’s accommodations (perhaps his son [?], house P.47.3), as well as a large, open-air stone carving area, slightly shaded in places, around a large central well, and a residential area for housing his employees (P.47.1). The place was probably abandoned quite quickly at the end of the reign of Neferneferuaten, the female-pharaoh who preceded Tutankhamun on the throne of Egypt, shortly after the death of Akhenaten. The distribution of the pieces of stone left on site reveals a clear specialization of sculptors in either softer (limestone or calcite) or harder stones (granite, diorite, or quartzite). But the private dwelling of the lord of the manor, Thutmose, proved to be most interesting to the eyes of the excavators.

Fig. 1: ivory horse blinker found on December 17 1912, during the excavation of the pit in the courtyard between houses P.47.1-3, in the name of “the favorite of the perfect god, the chief of works and sculptor, Thutmose” (Berlin ÄM 21193; H. 4.8; W. 11.3; D. 0.6 cm). Drawing S. Connor.



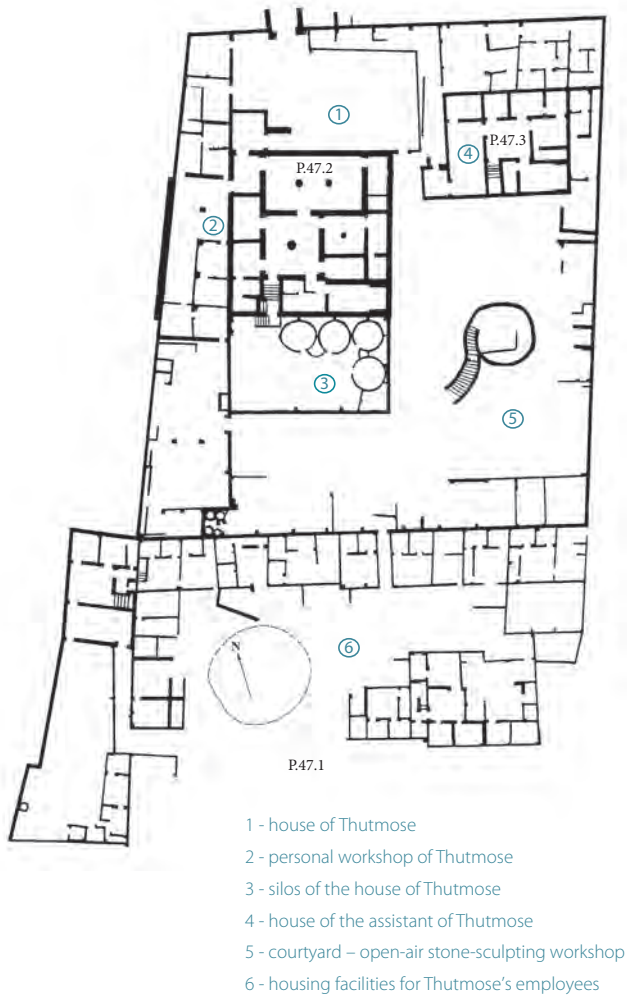


Fig. 2: schematic plan of the estate of the sculptor Thutmose. After Laboury 2010.

Fig. 3: panorama view of the site of the house of the sculptor Thutmose. Photograph A. Devillers.

The typology of houses at the site of Amarna has been the subject of detailed studies that allow us to identify the social position of their owner. In regard to Thutmose, who lived in a residential area in the south of the city and who was a neighbor of the Commander-in-Chief Ramose, it can be shown that he was in the top ten percent of society at the time, which constituted the ruling elite and the king's courtiers. Signs of his social importance are the presence of storage silos in a restricted-access area of his house, a sign of financial comfort, and stables for his chariot horses, a privilege of the elite. Compared to dwellings of the same size, Thutmose's villa has two notable features. First, it has an unusually large reception room for visitors — perhaps to impress the guests — with an annex where an entire series of sculptural pieces was found, including the famous bust of Nefertiti. Second, there is a private workshop, which was accessible only from the inside of Thutmose's house and not from the part of his business open to the public. It is a plaster workshop, without a doubt the private workshop of the head sculptor. These two features of his house allow for a precise reconstruction of Thutmose's creative process in his private workshop, as well as his relationship with his clients.

In the annex of the reception room (Borchardt's room P.47.2/18–9), beside the bust of the sublime queen were discovered some rare bronze and flint tools, samples of sculptural materials (such as fragments of steatite, a piece of granite 10 cm long, a calcite rod of similar dimensions, and a thin ivory plate painted red), models of statues (usually around 40 cm high), and parts of statues and statuettes in progress. Above all, a series of plaster casts was found that represents the different stages of the rendering of the physiognomy of a future statue. Because the only place in the complex of the sculptor Thutmose












| | | Physiognomic axis | | | |
|------------------|----------------|--|---|---|--|
| | | Akhenaten | Nefertiti | Neferneferuaten | Tutankhamun |
| Typological axis | Sculpted busts |  <p>Berlin 21.360 (P47.2/19; H. 57)</p> <p>Louvre E 11076 (unknown prov.; H. 58)</p> |  <p>Berlin 21.300 (P47.2/19; H. 50)</p> |  <p>Berlin 21.496 (P49.6; H. 20)</p> | |
| | Plaster heads |  <p>Berlin 21.351 (P47.2/19; H. 26)</p> |  <p>Berlin 21.349 (P47.2/19; H. 25,6)</p> | | |
| | Plaster faces |  <p>Berlin 21.348 (P47.2/19; H. 30)</p> <p>Cairo CG 753 (Amarna, Petrie; H. 26)</p> |  <p>Cairo JE 59288 (Amarna, Pendlebury; H. 25)</p> |  <p>Berlin 21.340 (P47.2/19; H. 20,4)</p> <p>Berlin 21.354 (P47.2/19; H. 20)</p> |  <p>Berlin 21.280 (P47.2/19; H. 26,5)</p> <p>Berlin 21.228 (P47.2/19; H. 24)</p> <p>Berlin 21.239 (P47.2/19; H. 24)</p> |
| | Plaster masks |  <p>Berlin 21.343 (P47.2/19; H. 14)</p> <p>Cairo JE 59289 (Amarna, Pendlebury; H. 17)</p> | | |  <p>London BM EA 65517 (Amarna?; H. 13)</p> |

Fig. 4: table of typological and physiognomic distribution of plaster and plastered studies of faces found in the annex of the reception hall of the house of the sculptor Thutmose (P.47.2/19) and other parallel Amarna objects (in shades of grey), at the same scale. D. Laboury.

that has revealed significant traces of plaster work happens to be his personal workshop, accessible only from within his house, we can be assured that the creator of these plaster casts is none other than the royal artist who lived in and ran this sculpture facility, Thutmose himself. These plaster studies can easily be categorized according to the individual they represent (the physiognomic axis) and the portion of the face or head they depict (the typological axis): a facial oval; a full face with neck and ears; a head that ends cleanly at that spot in the skull where a

headdress would be; and, finally, a complete bust. They also reveal physical traces of molding *and* modeling, a technological marker indicating that they were modelled in a soft material, presumably clay, then made into a mold, and finally reproduced and cast in plaster. This process of converting into plaster a work made in malleable and fragile material, especially in the hot, dry climate of Egypt, and the fact that most of these objects had painted or incised indications for reshaping or finalization, strongly suggest that the stages they represent reflect

a need for control, probably exercised by the person who commissioned the future work to sculpt. If only two steps are attested for portraits of individuals (a facial oval and then a complete face, *i.e.* a preliminary proof and then perhaps a final and approved model), the official likenesses of the members of the royal family involved a more complex production procedure, in four successive phases, with at least three levels of control, before the completion of the final version: a carved stone bust, completed, and even corrected, by a layer of plaster and finished

with sophisticated painting, precious inlays, or even gilding (at least in the case of the bust of Akhenaten, Berlin 21.260, a counterpart to that of Nefertiti). These busts of great value could then be duplicated and sent to the various sculpture workshops of the empire in order to ensure uniformity in the reproduction of the features of the king and queen in their statuary.

A few material clues allow us to go even further in reconstructing the actions of the sculptor in charge of the creation of a portrait to immortalize



Fig. 5: plaster head of Akhenaten (Berlin ÄM 21351; H. 26; W. 15; D. 20 cm) and details of its technical making (traces of modeling and casting). Photographs D. Laboury.

in statuary his commissioning patron. Indeed, the facial ovals and complete faces, discovered in Thutmose's house all have a casting surface on the back, which suggests that their original clay model was made resting flat on a support. The heads regularly end in a beveled edge at the base of the neck. Handling copies of these heads made by the casting workshop of the Berlin museum enables us to see that an observer in a sitting position who places this beveled edge on his or her knees is face to face with the plaster model. Furthermore, the base of the Berlin 21.299 head retains regular and nearly parallel lines that strongly suggest the impression of a wood plank on a soft material. Together, these details allow us to imagine the sculptor, plausibly Thutmose himself, in the middle of making his model in clay on a plank placed on his knees while sitting on a low stool, just as his fellow sculptors are represented in a contemporaneous scene depicting the chief sculptor of Queen Tiye, Iuty, on a relief

in the tomb at Amarna of Akhenaten's mother's superintendent, Huya.

If Thutmose went to the palace himself in order to obtain royal approval for his work using the plaster casts found by L. Borhardt and his team, the same was probably not true for court nobility who constituted the rest of his clientele, as a study of the faces of individuals discovered in his house shows. This probably explains not only the unusual size of the reception room of his villa, but also, and above all, the presence of all these casts, as well as samples of materials, models, and sculptures in progress in the annex of the same room, which allowed him to show off his efforts, discuss possible orders, and negotiate a fair price for his work, as "the favorite of the perfect god, chief of works and sculptor" of His Majesty.

FURTHER READING

Laboury 2005.

Fig. 6: depiction of the workshop of the chief sculptor of Queen Tiye, Iuty, in the tomb of the steward of Akhenaten's mother, Huya, at Amarna (TA 1), and profile view of the plaster head of Akhenaten Berlin ÄM 21351).

