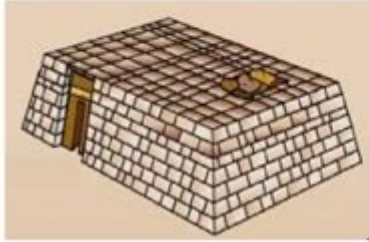


Mastaba Art History Definition

Mastaba



Mastaba Art History Definition: A Comprehensive Guide

Are you intrigued by ancient Egyptian architecture and art? Have you ever wondered about the enigmatic structures known as mastabas? This comprehensive guide delves into the mastaba art history definition, exploring its origins, evolution, and significance in understanding ancient Egyptian culture and beliefs. We'll unravel the mysteries surrounding these rectangular structures, examining their architectural features, artistic decorations, and the crucial role they played in the funerary practices of the Old Kingdom. Prepare to embark on a journey through time, uncovering the rich history and artistry embedded within these fascinating monuments.

What is a Mastaba? A Definition from the Ancient World

The term "mastaba" itself originates from the Arabic word meaning "bench" - a fitting description for these low, rectangular structures, typically made of mud-brick. In essence, a mastaba art history definition boils down to this: a mastaba was an ancient Egyptian tomb, primarily used during the Early Dynastic Period (circa 3100-2686 BCE) and the Old Kingdom (circa 2686-2181 BCE). These structures represent the earliest known type of private tomb architecture in Egypt, predating the more elaborate pyramids. Unlike the grand pyramids, which housed pharaohs, mastabas were designed for elite members of society, including nobles, high officials, and wealthy individuals.

Architectural Features: More Than Just Mud Bricks

While seemingly simple from a distance, mastabas possess distinct architectural features that reveal sophisticated engineering and planning for the afterlife. The typical mastaba design includes:

Subterranean Burial Chamber: The heart of the mastaba is its underground burial chamber, where the deceased's body, along with grave goods, was placed. This chamber, often accessed via a shaft, was carefully sealed to protect the remains.

Superstructure: The above-ground structure, made primarily of mud-brick, served as a marker for the tomb's location and a symbolic representation of the deceased's earthly dwelling.

False Door: A crucial element, the false door was carved into the superstructure's eastern wall. It served as a symbolic gateway, allowing the deceased's "ka" (spiritual essence) to move between the worlds.

Shaft and Serdab: Many mastabas incorporated a shaft leading down to the burial chamber, and some included a small, sealed chamber called a serdab, containing statues of the deceased. These statues were believed to be inhabited by the "ka" and provided a physical presence for offerings and rituals.

Mastaba Art and Decoration: A Glimpse into the Afterlife

The walls of mastabas weren't simply bare mud-brick; they were often decorated with elaborate reliefs, paintings, and inscriptions, providing invaluable insights into ancient Egyptian beliefs and daily life. This mastaba art history definition extends beyond the structure itself to encompass the rich artistic expressions found within:

Relief Sculptures: Depicting scenes from daily life, agricultural activities, and funerary rituals, these sculptures were meticulously crafted and painted, showcasing the deceased's social status and wealth.

Wall Paintings: Similar to the relief sculptures, wall paintings adorned the interior walls, offering glimpses into the deceased's world, their possessions, and their relationship to the gods. These vivid depictions are a testament to the skilled artistry of ancient Egyptian painters.

Inscriptional Texts: Hieroglyphic inscriptions were common, often including prayers, spells, and biographical information about the deceased, aiming to ensure a smooth transition to the afterlife.

Evolution of Mastaba Architecture: From Simple to Sophisticated

Mastaba architecture underwent a gradual evolution throughout the Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom. Initially, simple rectangular structures dominated the landscape. However, over time, mastabas became increasingly larger and more complex, reflecting the growing sophistication of Egyptian engineering and artistry. Some later mastabas even incorporated multiple burial chambers and elaborate internal layouts. This evolution ultimately paved the way for the development of the monumental pyramids, representing a significant advancement in architectural design and scale.

The Significance of Mastabas in Ancient Egyptian Culture

The construction and decoration of mastabas were not merely architectural endeavors; they were deeply intertwined with ancient Egyptian beliefs about death and the afterlife. These structures were designed to ensure the deceased's continued existence and well-being in the next world. The elaborate preparations, including the provision of grave goods and artistic representations, highlight the Egyptians' profound commitment to providing for their departed loved ones in the afterlife. Studying mastaba art history definition helps us understand the deeply held religious beliefs and societal structures of this remarkable civilization.

Conclusion

The mastaba art history definition encompasses far more than simply a rectangular tomb. It represents a significant chapter in the development of ancient Egyptian architecture, art, and funerary practices. By examining their architectural features, artistic decorations, and symbolic significance, we gain a profound understanding of the beliefs, societal structures, and artistic achievements of the Old Kingdom. The study of mastabas continues to offer invaluable insights into this fascinating period of human history.

FAQs

1. What is the difference between a mastaba and a pyramid? While both served as tombs, mastabas are rectangular structures built of mud-brick for nobles and elites, whereas pyramids were monumental structures built for pharaohs, usually made of stone.
2. Where can I see mastabas today? Many mastabas can be found at Saqqara, a vast necropolis near Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt.
3. What materials were used to construct mastabas? Primarily sun-dried mud-brick, although some later mastabas incorporated stone elements.
4. What kind of grave goods were commonly found in mastabas? A wide range of items, including furniture, jewelry, pottery, food, and tools, reflecting the deceased's social status and lifestyle.
5. How were mastaba paintings preserved? The dry climate of Egypt played a significant role in preserving the paintings, along with the use of durable pigments and the careful sealing of the tombs.

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that makes up the art world.

mastaba art history definition: A History of Art in Ancient Egypt Georges Perrot, Charles Chipiez, 1883

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classic writers, the study of hitherto neglected writings discloses many new and curious details. The energetic search for ancient inscriptions, and the scrupulous and ingenious interpretation of their meaning, which we have witnessed and are witnessing, have revealed to us many interesting facts of which no trace is to be found in Thucydides or Xenophon, in Livy or Tacitus; enabling us to enrich with more than one feature the picture of private and public life which they have handed down to us. In the effort to embrace the life of ancient times as a whole, many attempts have been made to fix the exact place in it occupied by art, but those attempts have never been absolutely successful, because the comprehension of works of art, of plastic creations in the widest significance of that word, demands an amount of special knowledge which the great majority of historians are without; art has a method and language of its own, which obliges those who wish to learn it thoroughly to cultivate their taste by frequenting the principal museums of Europe, by visiting distant regions at the cost of considerable trouble and expense, by perpetual reference to the great collections of engravings, photographs, and other reproductions which considerations of space and cost prevent the savant from possessing at home. More than one learned author has never visited Italy or Greece, or has found no time to examine their museums, each of which contains but a small portion of the accumulated remains of antique art. Some connoisseurs do not even live in a capital, but dwell far from those public libraries, which often contain valuable collections, and sometimes—when they are not packed away in cellars or at the binder's—allow them to be studied by the curious.

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mastaba art history definition: Egyptian Dawn Robert Temple, 2011 The mysteries of Ancient Egypt have proved an endless source of fascination to the world. Here, for the first time, international bestselling author Robert Temple seeks to expose the real history of this ancient civilisation. In this fascinating study, Temple unearths revelatory new evidence which challenges accepted truths about the history of Egypt and questions the evidence which most Egyptologists have relied on since 1910. In so doing he has sought to answer the two big questions which have until now been taken for granted- Where did Egyptian civilisation come from? And who built the pyramids, and why? With unprecedented access to lost portions of the valley temple which have long been closed to archaeologists, Temple presents a sensational, reconstructed story of Egypt which exposes a magnitude of previously unseen evidence, including- Pinpointing exact locations of

unopened royal tombs Presenting re-datings of key monuments using a revolutionary new dating technique Exposing faked evidence which has been credulously accepted by the Egyptological community Revealing who really built the pyramids Unearthing the real truth about Egypt's most amazing pyramid, Giza

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mastaba art history definition: Sphinx Christiane Zivie-Coche, 2004 Sphinxes are legion in Egypt--what is so special about this one?... We shall take a stroll around the monument itself, scrutinizing its special features and analyzing the changes it experienced throughout its history. The evidence linked to the statue will enable us to trace its evolution... down to the worship it received in the first centuries of our own era, when Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans mingled together in devotion to this colossus, illustrious witness to a past that was already more than two millennia old.--from the Introduction The Great Sphinx of Giza is one of the few monuments from ancient Egypt familiar to nearly everyone. In a land where the colossal is part of the landscape, it still stands out, the largest known statue in Egypt. Originally constructed as the image of King Chephren, builder of the second of the Great Pyramids, the Sphinx later acquired new fame in the guise of the sun god Harmakhis. Major construction efforts in the New Kingdom and Roman Period transformed the monument and its environs into an impressive place of pilgrimage, visited until the end of pagan antiquity. Christiane Zivie-Coche, a distinguished Egyptologist, surveys the long history of the Great Sphinx and discusses its original appearance, its functions and religious significance, its relation to the many other Egyptian sphinxes, and the various discoveries connected with it. From votive objects deposited by the faithful and inscriptions that testify to details of worship, she reconstructs the cult of Harmakhis (in Egyptian, Har-em-akhet, or Horus-in-the-horizon), which arose around the monument in the second millennium. We are faced, she writes, with a religious phenomenon that is entirely original, though not unique: a theological reinterpretation turned an existing statue into the image of the god who had been invented on its basis. The coming of Christianity ended the Great Sphinx's religious role. The ever-present sand buried it, thus sparing it the fate that overtook the nearby pyramids, which were stripped of their stone by medieval builders. The monument remained untouched, covered by its desert blanket, until the first excavations. Zivie-Coche details the archaeological activity aimed at clearing the Sphinx and, later, at preserving it from the corrosive effects of a rising water table.

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Together, text and images create a stunning tribute to the world of the Pharaohs--Publisher's description.

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mastaba art history definition: Primitive Negro Sculpture Paul Guillaume, Thomas Munro, 1926

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Mastaba - Wikipedia

The mastaba was the standard type of tomb in pre-dynastic and early dynastic Egypt for both the pharaoh and the social elite. The ancient city of Abydos was the location chosen for many of the cenotaphs.

Ancient Egyptian Mastabas

The mastaba was used by the early pharaohs of Pre- and Early-Dynastic periods, but faded out of royal use in favor of the pyramids. The word comes from the Arabic word for "bench," and it was a rectangular structure that served as a tomb.

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Mastaba, rectangular superstructure of ancient Egyptian tombs, built of mud brick or, later, stone, with sloping walls and a flat roof. A deep shaft descended to the underground burial chamber.

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