



Unknown (Egyptian)
Isis with the Infant Horus
Greco-Roman Period (332 BCE–32 CE)
bronze
8 15/16 x 2 3/16 in. (22.7 x 5.6 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Horace Mayer
56.11

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Isis with the Infant Horus
Greco-Roman Period (332 BCE–32 CE)

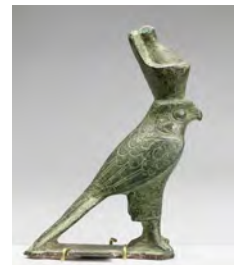
This bronze statuette probably served as a votive offering to Isis, perhaps in a shrine dedicated to the goddess. Isis, sister and wife of Osiris, is shown here nursing their son, Horus. This is one of the most popular depictions of Isis in her role as mother and protector of Horus. Horus wears the common hairstyle for children in ancient Egypt, a head shaved except for a long lock of hair on the side of the head, which was called the “side-lock of youth.” The adult Horus was frequently represented as a falcon or human figure with a falcon head.

According to myth, Horus inherited the kingship over Egypt after his father Osiris was murdered by Osiris’ brother, Seth. Throughout his youth and into his adulthood, Isis used her magical powers to protest and assist Horus. As a result, Isis is known for her healing and protective powers. She was also a model of motherhood and prayers were often addressed to her to protect children. Each new king who ascended to the throne was said to be the “living Horus,” and so Isis was also the symbolic mother of each pharaoh. Perhaps the popularity of the image of Isis nursing the infant Horus points to her key symbolic role in the transmission of power from one king to the next.

RELATED IMAGES



Unknown (Egyptian)
Horus
ca. 1100–660 BCE
1 7/16 x 3/8 x 7/16 in. (3.7 x 0.9 x 1.2 cm). Gift of Mr. Horace Mayer
(62.32.16.A)



Unknown (Egyptian)
Horus
no date
bronze; 4 x 2 15/16 in. (10.2 x 7.5 cm). Gift of Mr. Horace Mayer
(60.36.4)

Sources

Capel, Anne F., Glenn E. Markoe, and Richard A. Fazzini. “Horus the Child.” 126-7. *Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt*. New York: Hudson Hills Press (in Association with Cincinnati Art Museum), 1996.

Takahashi, Kozue. “Ancient Egyptian Hairstyles.” Minnesota State University EMuseum. <http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/dailylife/hairstyles.html>

Wilkinson, Richard H. *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. Thames & Hudson, 2003.



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DISCUSS

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This sculpture shows a mother (the goddess Isis) with her child (the god Horus). Scroll over the image of Isis to magnify.

- What details can you see with the magnifier?
- How would you describe the woman's facial features?
- How is she posed? How is she holding the infant Horus?
- What types of ornament adorn her headdress?
- What do you notice about the baby?
- What kinds of shapes and textures do you see?
- Are any portions of the sculpture missing?

Compare *Isis with the Infant Horus* with another mother and child from WCMA's collection (below right).



What similarities do you see? What are the differences?

Now compare the bronze of *Isis with Infant Horus* with the Greek figurine *Standing Draped Woman* (left), which may depict the goddess Aphrodite and was likely a grave offering.

Unknown (Boeotian, Greek)
Standing Draped Woman, Possibly Aphrodite
350-330 BCE
8 9/16 x 2 7/8 x 1 3/4 in. (21.7 x 7.3 x 4.4 cm)
terracotta
Gift of the son and daughters of Charles Bolles Bolles-Rogers, Class of 1907: Frederick Van D. Rogers, Mary Rogers Savage, and Nancy Rogers Pierson
77.63.46



Anonymous (Italian)
Madonna and Child with Saints
Late 15th century
tempera and gold leaf on panel
27 3/16 x 16 7/8 in. (69.1 x 42.8 cm)
Gift of Joseph O. Eaton, Class of 1895
29.1.16



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CREATE

Isis with the Infant Horus
Greco-Roman Period (332 BCE–32 CE)

Print a Venn diagram to compare Isis with Infant Horus and another artwork (click on the DISCUSS tab to find artwork to compare with Isis).

- Write each characteristic that applies ONLY to *Isis with the Infant Horus* in the circle on the left.
- List each characteristic that applies ONLY to the other artwork in the circle on the right.
- Place characteristics shown by BOTH artworks in the space where the two circles overlap.

Share your Venn diagram with a friend and discuss:

- Did your friend notice details that you missed or vice versa?
- Did comparing the sculpture of Isis with another artwork prompt you to notice things you hadn't noticed before?
- What does each artwork say about the figures they depict? What do you see that makes you say that?

Now try your own hand at making a sculpture! Select three characteristics from your Venn diagram and create your own sculpture out of clay or modeling dough that incorporates those three characteristics.