



Unknown (Egyptian)
Two fingers amulet
date unknown
obsidian
Overall: 2 3/16 x 13/16 in. (5.6 x 2 cm)
Gift of Horace Mayer

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two Fingers Amulet

Amulets were personal adornments worn by the living and placed on mummy wrappings to provide protection and aid on the journey from death to the afterlife. The color, shape, and other qualities of the materials were believed to endow the amulet and its wearer with special powers and protections. This amulet represents two fingers, with incised details indicating creases at the knuckles and nails. This type of amulet was placed on a mummy near the incision where the organs were removed for embalming and may have represented the fingers of Anubis, the god of embalming. It is possible that this type of amulet was also intended to “seal” the wound, preventing harmful forces from entering the body.

Two-finger amulets were often made of hard, black stone like obsidian, basalt, or steatite. The black color of these stones was associated with the underworld. Hard

stones were selected for durability, as these amulets were meant to retain their power for eternity.

RELATED IMAGES



Amulet of Sebek
date unknown
faience; 1 7/8 x 3/8 x 1/2 in. (4.8 x 1 x 1.2 cm). Gift of Horace Mayer (59.21.13.A)



Sacred eye amulet
date unknown
faience; 9/16 x 11/16 in., 1/8 in. (1.5 x 1.8 cm, 0.3 cm). Gift of Horace Mayer (60.39.2.E)

Sources

“Obsidian Amulet in the Shape of Two Fingers.” The British Museum, catalogue entry for object EA 59500
http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/o/obsidian_amulet_in_the_shape_o.aspx

Andrews, Carol. *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*. 1994 (British Museum Press). University of Texas Press, 1998.



Unknown (Egyptian)
Two fingers amulet
date unknown
obsidian
Overall: 2 3/16 x 13/16 in. (5.6 x 2 cm)
Gift of Horace Mayer

DISCUSS

Two Fingers Amulet

This amulet depicts two fingers. It may have been placed on or within a mummy's wrappings to protect the body from harm. Amulets were also worn or carried by the living to insure a person's health and well-being.

Can you think of any other symbols of protection or well-being?

If you were making an amulet to represent your family, what symbol would you use? What symbol could stand for your school? Your town? Why?

Obsidian, the hard, black stone used in this amulet, was valued in ancient Egypt for its durability and because its color was associated with the underworld.

Why do you think durability was important?

What do you associate with the color black?

What do you associate with other colors such as red? White? Yellow? Green?

If you made a protective amulet, what color would you choose? Why?



Unknown (Egyptian)
Two fingers amulet
date unknown
obsidian
Overall: 2 3/16 x 13/16 in. (5.6 x 2 cm)
Gift of Horace Mayer

CREATE

Two Fingers Amulet

How big is this amulet?

Can you tell from the photograph?

Try using the measurements noted below the picture to make a sketch of the two fingers that is true to the actual size. Is it what you expected? Why do you think the maker chose that size? (Click on the DISCUSS tab for a clue).

Now make a drawing of the amulet at ten times the actual size. If the sculpture were really that large, would that change the way you think about it? How do you think a large sculpture would have been used in ancient Egypt?

Now it's your turn! Make your own amulet out of clay or modeling dough. You can make a two-fingers amulet or invent your own symbol of well-being and protection. What size, shape, and color will you choose? Why?