



NORMAN BEL GEDDES DESIGNER

Of this sculptured Mayan death's head from Guatemala, Mr. Bel Geddes said:

This intrigues me.

I don't especially like it but it is fascinating. I am convinced it was not made as a thing of beauty to be looked at for any special reason.

The carving of the skull is terrifyingly realistic and yet is not in the least realistic. The eye is a perfect circle whereas, in a skull, it is concave. The nose is a bump whereas, in a skull it is a cavity. It has an enormous upper lip which no skull has.

There is a lower jaw with teeth but no lip. There is a slight resemblance to reality in the jawbone shape but it is considerably smaller than the real thing. The cheek has no relation to a cheekbone in a skull, nor has the forehead, or the rear portion.

The whole thing is an excellent, though frankly unpleasant, bit of abstract design.



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He also liked the drawing on a Ptolemaic mummy bandage, 3rd century B.C. from Memphis, Egypt.

This is something of everyday life—not so different from today's comic strip, except that the drawing has more style and its significance is of a higher order.

If I read the subject correctly, it becomes apparent that some kind of rehearsal is taking place.

This subject matter has nothing to do with its merit as a work of art, but it is significant in its simplicity, directness and composition. It was done, not as a work of art, but in the course of everyday living. It has great charm merely due to the conflict between the drawing instrument and the texture of the cloth.

The textile weave is exceptionally fine, as all ancient Egyptian textiles are. In that regard, it is not exceptional, but it is very exceptional compared to our textiles of today.



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And this carved wolf masquette, 12th or 13th century A.D. from Key Marco, Florida.

This mask, found on Key Marco in 1895, below water and beneath the endless and complicated root system of a mangrove swamp, is the first instance of anything of this nature or of this fine quality that I have seen fashioned by the aborigines of Florida.

Despite its being much less realistic than a caricature I would like to compare it to something contemporary, the Disney cartoons, simply because the objects were part of the people's daily life. A living art goes hand in hand with the life of its time.

It is a tragic example of what the museums are up against that the incredible, Venice-like city where this was found, is probably due to lack of funds to continue its exploration, covered over again with mangroves.