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Auction: Egypt's monuments for sale!

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Auction: Egypt's monuments for sale! Dr. Hussein Duqeil

Newspapers close to Egypt's ruling regime have announced that an auction for Egyptian artefacts will be held on April 18, 2018 in New York City, adding that 15 rare pieces of Egyptian antiquities will be sold at this auction!

After reading these reports, I thought that the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities officials will certainly respond to this, especially that they are always present in media shows on the pretext of the bland discoveries they announce.

However, Shaaban Abdel-Gawad, the Supervisor General of the Antiquities Repatriation Department within the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, only told the press shamelessly that his ministry is aware that these pieces will be auctioned off in New York on April 18!

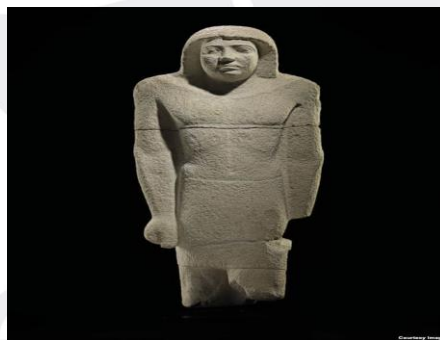
The official said that his ministry is verifying the ownership documents of these pieces in order to ascertain the way they were taken out of Egypt. However, we have the right to argue that until the ministry studies the documents - if there is actually something of this kind - the pieces will have been sold!

Abdel-Gawad's recognition of the Ministry of Antiquities' awareness of the pieces which will be sold at the New York auction raises suspicions around the ministry officials - who still seek to justify continuation of these auctions and smuggling of Egypt's antiques. They often say that such antiquities might have been sold lawfully before 1983 when Law No. 117 was issued, banning the trade of antiquities. It is really shameful for these officials to keep repeating such justifications instead of seeking to solve the problem. In fact, the solution is easy, but it needs strong will, which the officials of the Egyptian antiquities unfortunately do not have. It is noteworthy that smuggling, theft and sale of Egyptian antiquities have remarkably increased after the 2013 military coup.

In fact, selling our rare artefacts outside Egypt has not stopped since the coup of 2013. At a time when the Egyptian officials showed no interest in the reports on the New York auction, Christie's website announced that "it is auctioning off 27 Ancient Egyptian artefacts in New York on April 18. The website said that the pieces on display included a rare statue of Sekhem-ankh-Ptah, an ancient Egyptian high official who lived during the Old Kingdom period (2389-2255 B.C.), as well as mummy masks from the Roman period. Some pieces of Egyptian antiquities for sale at this auction was estimated at more than one million and 500 thousand US dollars!!

The pieces on sale included:

1- A rare limestone statue of Sekhemankhptah, a minister who lived between 2389 and 2255 BC. He was called Minister of the Ministers, as he occupied a large position and was performing great tasks at the King's Palace. The statue is estimated at USD one million to one million and a half.



2- A monumental red granite head of Pharaoh Nectanebo II of the late period of 30th Dynasty. It is estimated at USD 600 to 900 thousand.

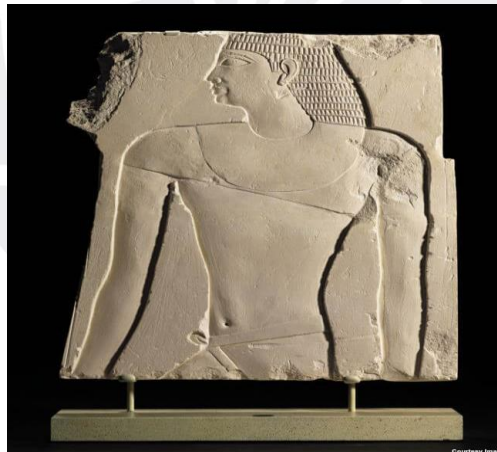




3- Egyptian Granodiorite female head late new Kingdom to third intermediate period, 19th – 22nd dynasty, 1307-712 B.C. It is estimated at USD 200-300 thousand.



4- Egyptian limestone relief old kingdom showing a high-ranking person in the state, 6th dynasty, 2360-2195 B.C. It is estimated at USD 150 to 250 thousand.



5- Two Egyptian limestone reliefs of Nyankhnesut Old Kingdom, early 6th dynast, Circa 2323-2291 B.C. The two pieces are estimated at USD 120 to 180 thousand.

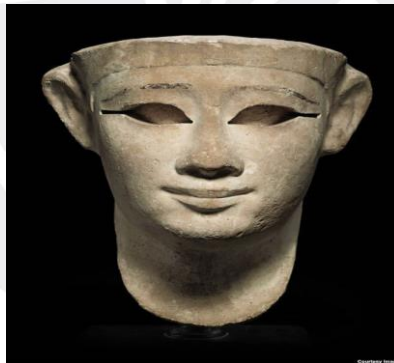




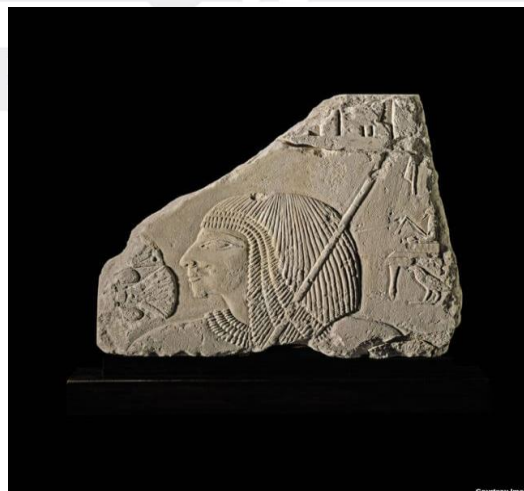
6- An Egyptian limestone relief fragment late Old Kingdom to Middle Kingdom, 6th-12th dynasty, 2345-1773 B.C. The piece is estimated at USD 100 to 150 thousand.



7- An Egyptian plaster sculptor's model of a Pharaoh from the 30th dynasty-early Ptolemaic period, Circa 380-246 B.C. The piece is estimated at USD 100 to 150 thousand.

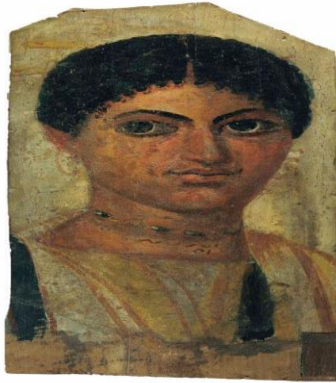


8- An Egyptian limestone relief fragment New Kingdom, 19th dynasty, Reign of Seti I, 1294-1279 B.C. The piece is estimated at USD 80 to 120 thousand.





9- Painted wood mummy portrait of a woman Roman period, Circa first half of the 2nd century A.D. The piece is estimated at USD 80 and 120 thousand.



10- A limestone block statue of Senbef Late Period, early 26th dynasty, Circa 664-600 B.C. The piece is estimated at USD 50 to 70 thousand.



Finally

We feel sorry that the Egyptian riches and treasures are being wasted before our eyes without doing anything to rescue them. Moreover, these artefacts could reveal important information about different periods of the history of Egypt, which we really need to know. How long will we keep watching while our antiquities are being sold, and when will those officials be held accountable for this?!