

Object Histories

Look carefully at the object pictured below and at its description provided in the museum label. Answer the following questions about the object's history.



Museum Label

Title: Statue of a seated dignitary

Material: Basalt

Date: 1st century CE (Roman period)

Findspot: Karanis, Egypt (University of Michigan excavations, 1928)

Object number: KM 8218

This statue of a local official, probably a priest, was excavated near the South Temple in Karanis, Egypt. Its Egyptian style shows survivals of indigenous artistic traditions into the Roman period.

Questions:

1. What does the label tell you about what the object was used for, and what it was made to do?
2. Who do you think made something like this? Someone at home for themselves? A highly skilled artisan who made only a few at a time? A team of people in a workshop who made a lot of them? None of the above?
3. Do you think the maker or makers of this object were also the ones who used it? Or is it more likely that it was used by a different person? Is it too hard to tell? What evidence do you see to support your opinion?
4. Does the label tell you anything about how the object came to be in a museum? Was the object excavated? Was it donated by a collector?
5. Have you ever visited a museum — the Kelsey or another museum — or seen one in a movie or on TV? Think about how objects like this one are used in a museum setting. Does it differ from its original use? How?
6. If you were a museum professional (like an educator or curator), how do you think you might use this object?