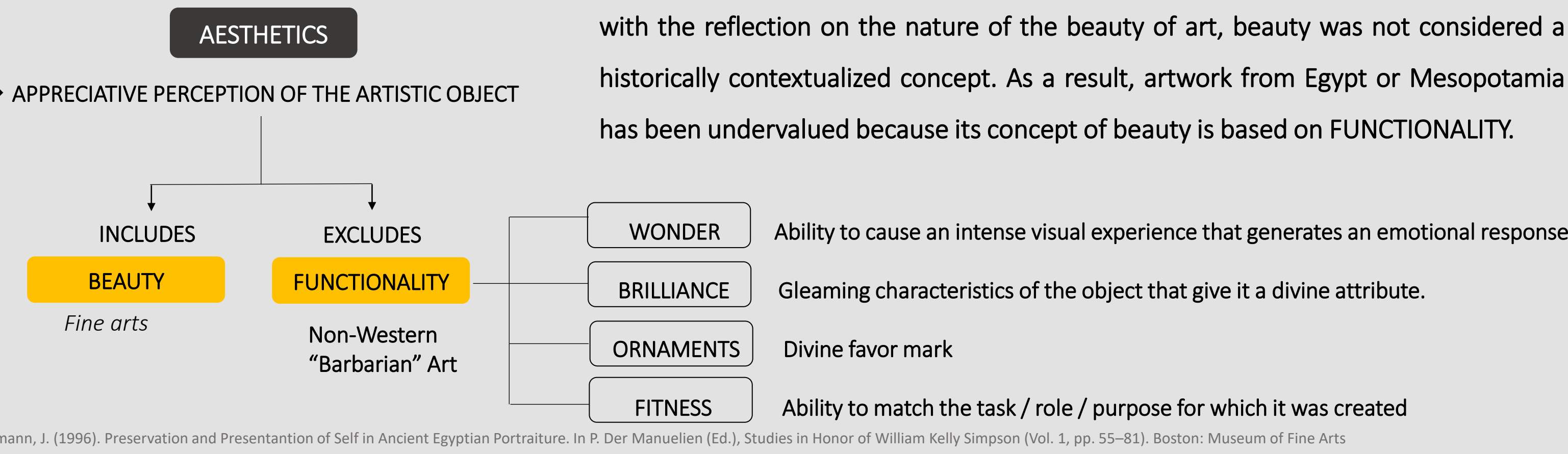


CHALLENGES OF WESTERN AESTHETIC THEORY - Inapplicability of the concept to non-Western contexts

Egyptians and Mesopotamians understood the non-discursiveness of the intelligible world, preferring the use of images, human intuitive thinking, to the use of letters, discursive thinking. Therefore, the visual domain cannot be seen as a mere formal property of the object, because it is a highly symbolic code.

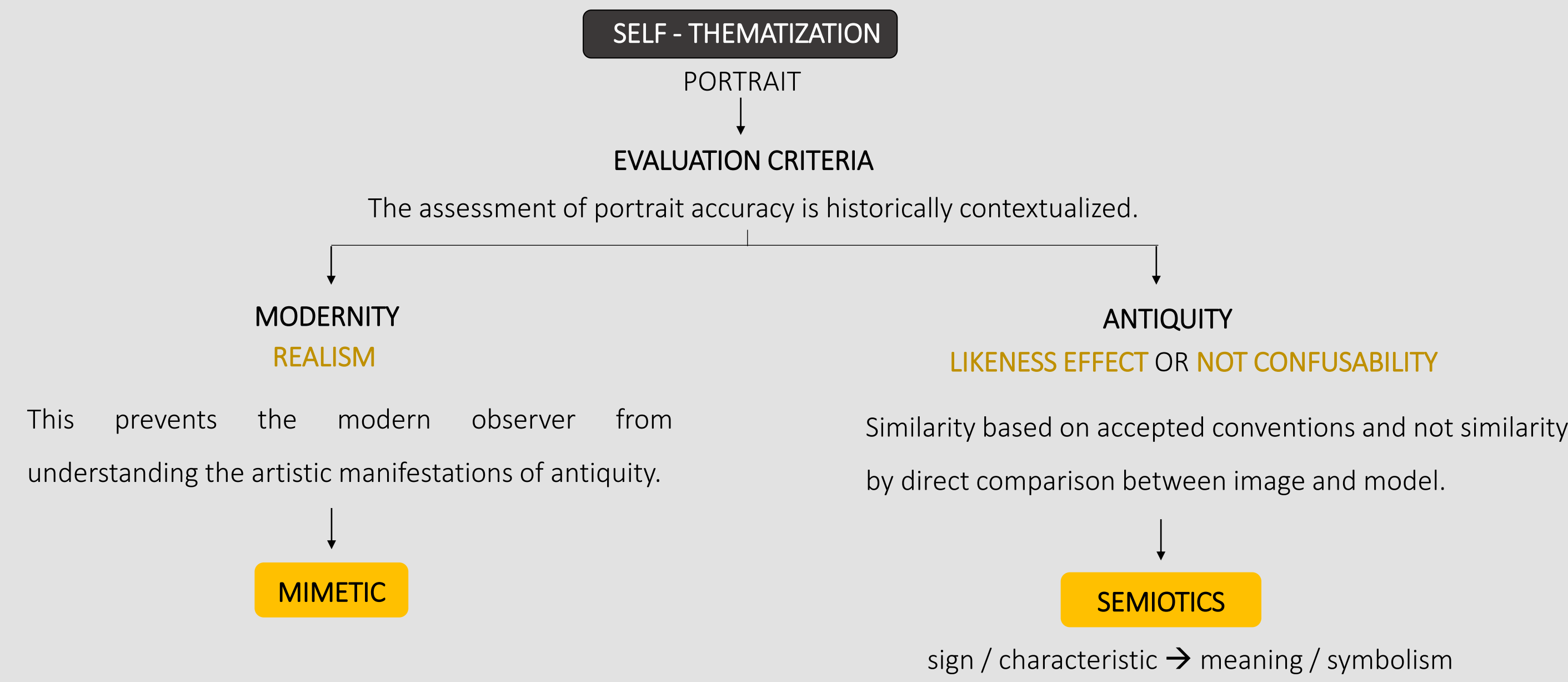
During the 18th and 19th centuries, the term "aesthetic" was established as the property of appreciative perception of the artistic object. Despite being associated with the reflection on the nature of the beauty of art, beauty was not considered a historically contextualized concept. As a result, artwork from Egypt or Mesopotamia has been undervalued because its concept of beauty is based on FUNCTIONALITY.



PORTRAIT CONCEPT - Egypt and Mesopotamia

MIMETICS VS SEMIOTICS

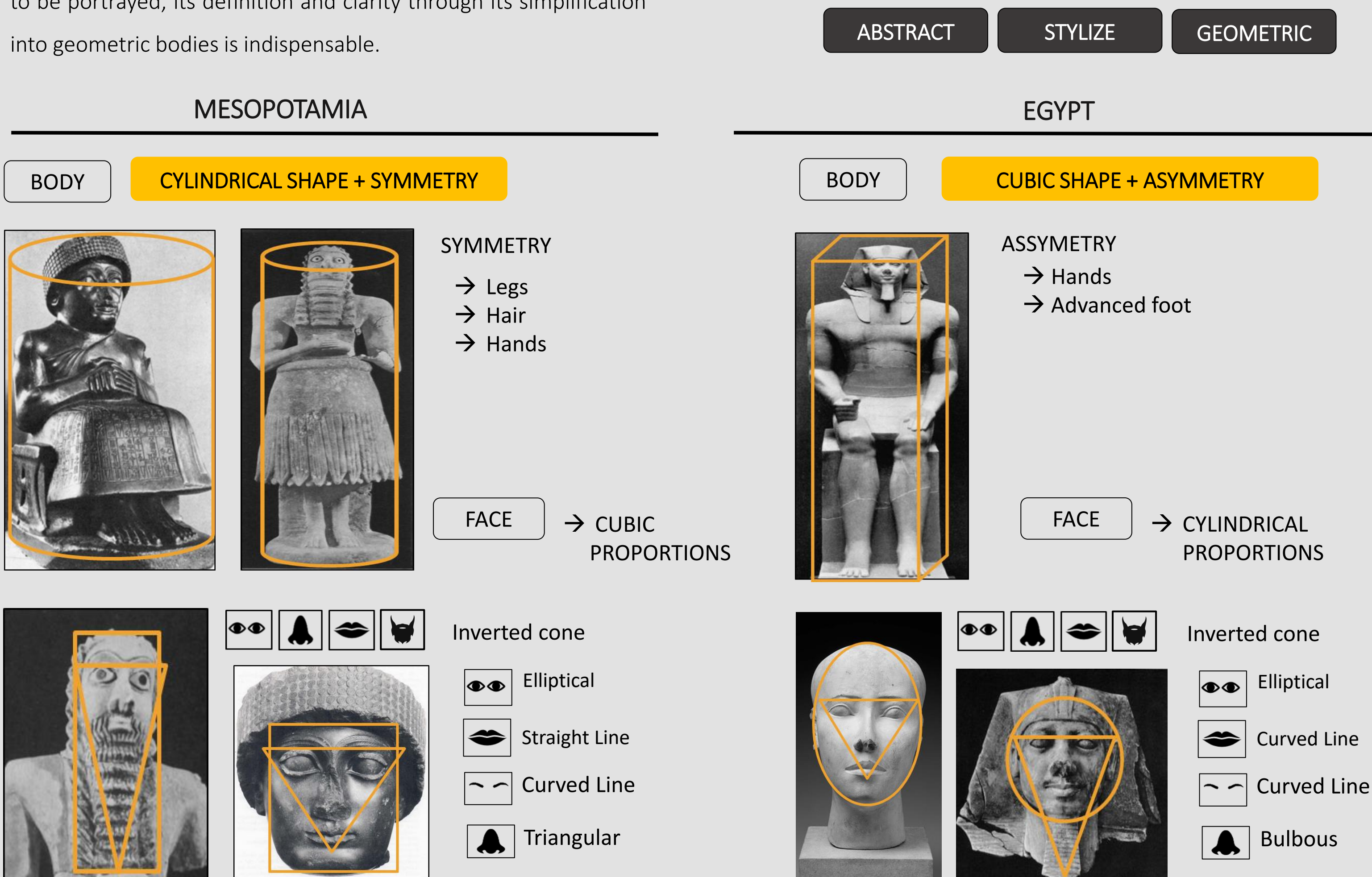
The portrait must be seen as a form of thematization of the self, that is, the use of the SELF theme for artistic production.



ABSTRACTION & GEOMETRIZATION

It is wrong to conceive that the realistic representation of objects precedes the geometrization of shapes. In primitive times, because of the innumerable chaotic characteristics of the object to be portrayed, its definition and clarity through its simplification into geometric bodies is indispensable.

In both Egypt and Mesopotamia the abstract and geometric tendency prevails above the adoption of naturalistic registers and manifests in a similar way:



Schlossman, B. L. (1978). Portraiture in Mesopotamia in the Late Third and Early Second Millennium B.C. Part I: The Late Third Millennium. Archiv Für Orientforschung, 26, 56-77

Dunham, D. (1943). Portraiture in Ancient Egypt. Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, XLI (246), 68-72



CRE 2020/2021

UNIVERSITY OF THE AEGEAN

9-16 MAY 2021



THE PRESENTATION OF

SELF

IN EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA

[3RD MILLENNIUM B.C.]

PORTRAIT AESTHETIC CHALLENGES

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BASED ON THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PORTRAITURE IN EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA, WE AIM TO UNDERSTAND THE PORTRAIT AESTHETIC CHALLENGES. THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICTUOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AESTHETIC THEORIES AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE WE WILL TRY TO DISTINGUISH THE INHERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARTISTIC OBJECT FROM THE METHODS OF EVALUATING IT.

PORTRAIT

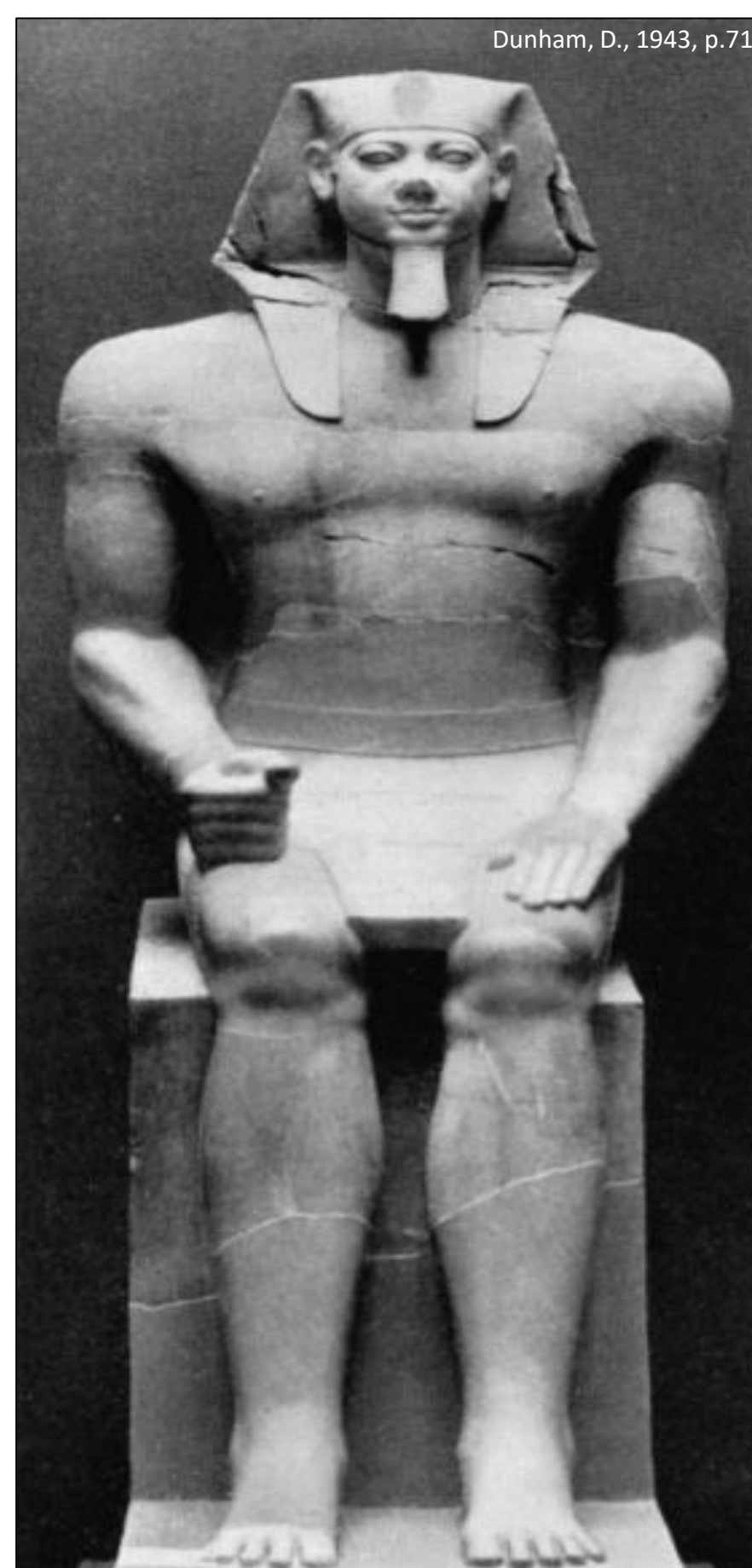
MESOPOTAMIA



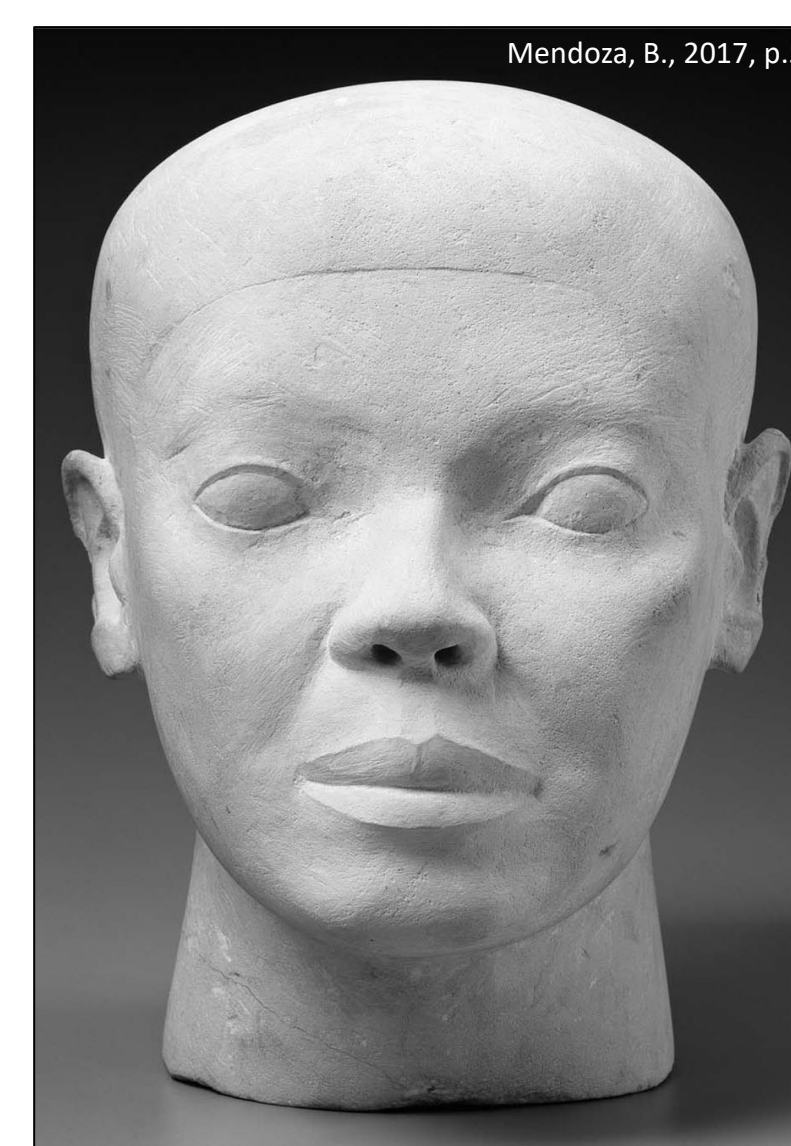
GUDEA
Tello, c.2144-2124



TELL ASMAR HOARD
Tell Asmar, c.2750-2500



MENKAURE
Pyramid, c.2490-2472



RESEARVE HEADS
Giza Cemeteries, c.2551-2496

ROYALTY

HIGH SOCIETY

EGYPT

3

SIGNATURE TRAIT

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT OF IDENTIFICATION

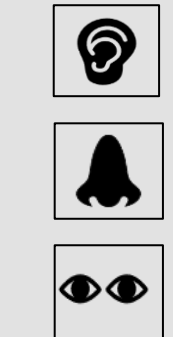
The essential thing was not resemblance but the impossibility of being denied anonymity.

MESOPOTAMIA



Cheeks
Protruding
Thin
Eye contour
Crown | Necklace | Hair

ROYALTY



HIGH SOCIETY

EGYPT



Protruding
Bulbous
Bulging
Nemes | Beard

Grzymalski, K. (1999). Royal Statuary. In D. Arnold, C. Ziegler, & K. Grzymalski (Eds.), Egyptian Art in the Age of Pyramids (pp.51-55). New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Winter, J. J. (1989). The Body of the Able Ruler: Toward an Understanding of the Statues of Gudea. In H. Bahrens & et al. (Eds.), Dumu-E-dub-lu-a: Studies in Honor of A.W. Sjoberg (pp. 573-583). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

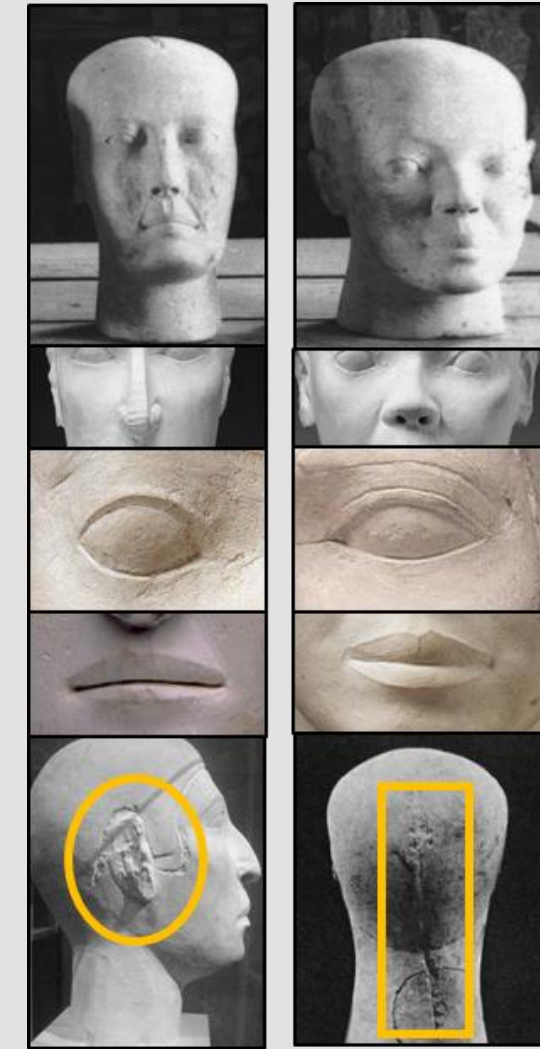


MEN – bald / long hair, beard, wool skirts, bare chest
WOMEN – various hairstyles, dresses

- Eyes: lapis lazuli OR Orange OR black Contracted pupils OR dilated
- Hair: Horizontal orientation OR inclined
- Mouth: Naturalistic mouth OR stylized

POSSIBLE TO DISTINGUISH ETHNICITY AND FAMILY RELATIONS

- Tilt up
- United to cheeks Bulbous OR thin
- Almonds OR stretched out
- Smile OU down corners Fleshy OR thin



Mendoza, B. (2017). Reserve Head. UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, 1(1), 1-14

4

ATTRIBUTES & FUNCTION

BODY CHARACTERISTICS

ALLOW

PERSONIFY

MORE THAN INDIVIDUALIZING

Attributes and functions that integrate the individual in the social order

PROTECTION ← GODS ← Responsibility / Expectation → HOMO RELIGIOSUS → REVERENCE

MESOPOTAMIA

DIVINELY FORMED FEATURES

- Chosen by the gods
- Created in the likeness of the gods

Fair, capable, strong, intelligent, attentive and pious

- SIZE: Exceptionally large
- SHAPE: Vigorous
- POSTURE: Vitality, grace
- EARS: Intelligence
- EYES: Wonder
- PROPS: God's choice

ROYALTY

KING'S IMAGE

=

REIGN'S IMAGE

HIGH SOCIETY

GODS

PROTECTION → HUMANITY → SUBMISSION REVERENCE → Limited access to temples → VOTIVE STATUES [TELL ASMARD HOARD]

- POSTURE: Prayer Gesture (1) kneeling, (2) clasped hands
- EYES: Wonder
- MESSAGE: Name + prayer

- Incorporates speaker essence
- Permanent Presence of Speaker

EGYPT

DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS

- Pharaoh is a god
- Personification of Osiris

God, father and protector of Egypt

- SIZE: Big – Hierarchy
- SHAPE: Vigorous - Ideal body
- POSTURE: Vitality (1) sitting on the throne; (2) accompanied
- EARS: Intelligence
- PROPS: God's choice

GODS

PROTECTION → HUMANITY → SUBMISSION REVERENCE → Ascension to heavenly plane → Desire for eternity and immortality → FUNERARY STATUARY [RESERVE HEADS]

→ **FACIAL CHARACTERISTICS** – Keep the deceased's appearance and character alive – KA

Allow the deceased to be transfigured from a state of life to a state of death –BA

CONCLUSIONS

- **COGNITIVE RECOGNITION** and the communication of meaning overlaps the **MIMETIC REPRODUCTION** of the model.
- The identification is based on visual codes – **SIGNATURE TRAIT + FUNCTIONS / ATTRIBUTES**.
- In artistic representation the norm is the **PERSONIFICATION** and not the **INDIVIDUALIZATION**.