

ArchaeaTechnica

Art Conservation Services



Carlos Museum Mummy Diary

Day 4 – Carrying on with the cartonnage trappings, we have started work on Taosiris' mask and foot case.

The mask is in solid condition, it is thicker than the other pieces of cartonnage, but it has been warped, probably by being stored lying flat off the body for a long time. In the image below on the right, you can also see how the mask was made over a mold of a face. The mask mold was probably made of clay – evidence of clay has been found inside other mummy masks.



Warping on the mask



mask interior

Like the other pieces, the surface is dusty. There is some cracking and separation of the cartonnage along the edges but the warpage is the most problematic issue as the mask won't fit back on the mummy in this shape.

Renée began by dusting the mask and cleaning with cosmetic sponges where possible. She stabilized some of the cracks along the edges- note the handy hair clip clamp in the photo on the right below providing gentle pressure as the edges go back together in the image below. Then the slow process of humidification and reshaping began using an ultrasonic cool mist device to humidify the cartonnage. The cartonnage is gradually eased back into to position using pieces of foam and light weights. This process will take several days to get slowly back into as near to the original shape as we can make it



Consolidating the edges



Humidifying and reshaping the mask



The second phase of humidifying and reshaping the mask

The foot case is in the most fragile condition of all the pieces of cartonnage. It has been nearly flattened, causing the paint to flake and the layers of linen to delaminate. The upper part of the foot is missing and it is unclear if there was ever a back panel. The linen on the back had been covered with a wash of gesso, adding to the brittleness of the piece. There was an attempt in the past to glue the linen together and to set down the paint, but that seems to have only made things worse- embrittling the linen and causing much of the paint to fall off in large pieces. The sticky glue that was used has made the dust collect more thickly on the painted surface. A piece of the original linen band that secured the foot case around the ankles remains adhered to it and there are scraps of linen bandage adhered to the reverse side.



Proper right side before treatment



proper left side before treatment



The back of the foot covering before treatment

The safest way to reshape the foot case will be to place it where it belongs on the mummy, after putting a protective plastic film over the mummy's feet. Then it can be slowly humidified a little at a time. The old glued repair makes using the ultrasonic humidifier impossible to use since the painted surface will just turn to a sticky paste as the glue softens, so small amounts of local humidity will be applied from the back and the foot case gradually eased into place using small light weights and gentle pressure. Once it is in its proper shape, all the repairs and the cleaning can be done.



Beginning the foot case humidification process on the mummy

Anna Connolly, conservation intern, has started to examine and treat another piece of the Senusret Collection cartonnage. This piece of cartonnage depicts a winged scarab. A shiny coating was put on at some time in the relatively recent past, similar to the coating on the sides of the Senusret Collection foot case. It was seriously damaged by insects in the past and the proper right wing wing was broken where it was the most damaged on the back. Anna will be cleaning it, removing the coating, if possible, rejoining the pieces and filling the losses



The winged scarab cartonnage



Testing for coating removal