

# Spirits of Ancient Egypt manifest in exhibits

"A University Collects" and "Egypt: Photographs by William Deacon" Ringhouse Gallery, Run ends November 15

review by Michael Cenknner

The two shows at the Ringhouse Gallery, "Egypt: A University Collects" and "Egypt: Photographs by William Deacon", offer insight into the times of Ancient Egypt.

"A University Collects" is the name of the principal exhibition. It features the university's mummy.

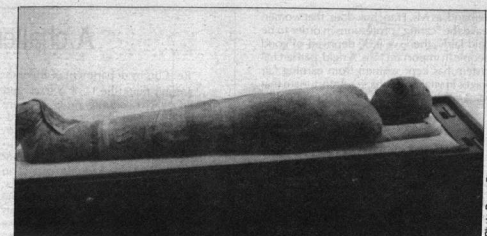
A panoply of gods at the top of the stair orients the viewer into the ancient Egyptian way of seeing life, death, and the world. First of all, the god Ptah, (the "heart and tongue of the gods") created the world by his word. The pharaoh ruled over his land as high priest-king, and was son of the god Amun. The priests, shaven and purified, would serve the god in his or her temple, which was a sanctuary for that god. The people were not admitted to the temple, but hoped only to pass through death into paradise.

After death, if the deceased were wealthy enough, the body was embalmed. Herodotus

tells us that the brains were removed through the nostrils with an iron hook. All organs except the heart were removed. The liver, lungs, stomach and intestines were saved because "if immortality is to be assured, all must be re-united and kept so forevermore."

Display of the U of A's mummy is the main reason for this exhibition. The mummy was bequeathed to the U of A by John Edward Woodrow, an Englishman, in 1968. It had come into his family through 19th century British campaigns in the Sudan. According to Jane Kurany, Information Co-ordinator, University Archives and Collections, the mummy disappeared for a time in the '70's, and was eventually found by two children playing in an abandoned warehouse, "like something out of the movies". Police turned the mummy over to the coroner, who in turn contacted the University. In 1971 the mummy came home.

The mummy dates back to about 238 B.C., the Greek or Ptolemaic period. His coffin is made of cedar planks sealed with pitch, constructed in the time-tested mortise and tenon method. The mummy's simple box stands in contrast to the vast scientific knowledge and



The University of Alberta's very own mummy

Photo: Bruce Fernman

finesse the University has brought to bear in this exhibit.

Three very impressive examinations of the mummy by U of A personnel have revealed much about the Egyptian's life: Dr. Richard Smith of the Classics Department, an expert in hieroglyphics, determined from markings on the coffin that the embalmed man had been a scribe, working in the service of the temple. Dr. Smith also translated the prayer on the coffin. Dr. Charles Baker, an expert in radiology, concluded from X-rays of the mummy's jaws that the ancient scribe had had teeth extracted, and was probably around 28 years old at the time of his death. A CAT scan by Dr. Bill Castor at the Cross Cancer Institute further revealed irregular bone structure in the lower limbs, indicating a tumour as the probable cause of death. Ann Howatt Krahn of Canadian Museums revealed by fabric rehabilitation the ceremonial significance of the wrappings.

A large and beautifully portrayed mural by H.G. Glyde, formerly of the Arts Department of the U of A, is a facsimile of a tomb painting from the period the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, dating from around 1300 B.C., which describes the trials of the dead, in order to enter the underworld of Osiris.

The mural depicts the most important trial, the "weighing of the heart". Anubis the jackal-headed god carrying the ankh-cross of life, leads in the scribe Hunefer, who although being judged betrays no fear in his detached countenance. His heart is weighed against the white feather of truth by the goddess Maat, while the monster-god Sekhmet waits to devour it if it should prove unworthy, thus punishing the soul with a second death. But Hunefer's heart passes the test, and the scribe-god Thoth records on a tablet Hunefer's

good deeds and conduct during his life. Hunefer is presented to Osiris, the King of the Dead. His throne is on a lake of naton (embalming fluid) out of which grows a lotus, symbolising life out of death. Four deities guard the internal organs of the deceased.

Ancient Egypt is also featured at the gallery in a photographic exhibit.

William Deacon, a Toronto photographer, first went to Egypt in 1978 as assistant photographer with the late Roloff Beny. At that time Deacon was exposed firsthand to qualities of Egyptian art and architecture.

Deacon conveys in his stark and excellent photographs the darkly brilliant past of Ancient Egypt. In addition, he communicates the importance and power of Ancient Egypt today.

Nine photographs make up this collection. As a series, they show the time-lapsed ruin of Ancient Egypt. In mood they range from a dark, mystic vitality ("Temple of Set I, Abydos") to an oppressive desolation ("Road Between the Pyramids"). The hideous (mummified crocodiles) is sometimes placed with the innocent (a kitten).

Perhaps the most striking juxtaposition is in the photo "Statue of Rameses II, Memphis" in which the great Pharaoh now stares, vacantly life-like, one stone hand broken at his side. His smooth, oblong sculpted head-piece in the foreground of the photo contrasts sharply with the spiky ferns and rough pallet on which he now unceremoniously lies.

The Ringhouse Gallery is located on Campus south of the Faculty Club. Its hours are Tues. - Fri., 11:00 - 5:00 p.m., Sundays 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.



Mural depicts the weighing of the heart after death

Photo: Bruce Fernman

# Actor Eyamie chats about Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind*

by Randal Smathers

Tony Eyamie is a small man, with a rounded, animated face. We are sitting in a bar talking about the season premiere at Phoenix Theatre of Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind*. Eyamie is obviously a better actor than baseball fan. He is more enthused about *A Lie of the Mind* than he is about the playoff game in front of him on TV. Eyamie will play his first major dramatic role in this production--and loves talking about it.

Eyamie tells me that *A Lie of the Mind* is a love story. "It was heralded as Romeo and Juliet, but it's not really." It concerns a man and a woman "drawn to each other despite (a separation), and how their passion transcends that." The separation is a result of physical abuse, as the play begins after the man has beaten the woman, and then moves forward from there. Eyamie's role is that of the woman's brother.

The cast ranges from local talents like Eyamie and Marianne Copithorne, both U of A drama grads, to people like John and Susan Wright. John toured Edmonton last year out of Montreal in *Fire*, and Susan played the title role in Shaw's *Mother Courage* at Stratford this year. "Susan Wright can be a pretty formidable woman at times," says Eyamie. He also says that the play is fun to work on. "It is not full of angst."

Eyamie is also enjoying the chance to work with director Jim Guedo. "Jim has done Shepard before, he knows what Shepard is about," says Eyamie.

Guedo is taking over the Phoenix from

outgoing artistic director Bob Baker. For his first season, he is doing what Eyamie calls a "big play" season. *A Lie of the Mind*, the season opener, won major drama awards in New York in 1985 for its Broadway debut. "Jim is trying to mandate controversial plays... he is striving for the theatrical," says Eyamie.

I ask Eyamie if he feels any urge to act "like Sam Shepard," given that many of Shepard's characters are at least partially autobiographical. "People often think that Sam Shepard's characters are always Sam Shepard, but that's not so, often they are just Frank, or Joe, or Bob. Most people have already experienced his characters. To research them, you go to people you know--your mother, or Aunt Nellie, who drinks too much sometimes and tells stories. He writes about oddities, people you might shake your head about, people with really wierd ideas."

Eyamie notes that Shepard does draw strongly on personal experience. Shepard's mother-in-law had suffered partial brain damage, and this is reflected in the character of Beth in *A Lie of the Mind*. Eyamie admires Copithorne's portrayal of Beth. Because her lines are so disjointed, and so effectively delivered, it creates a problem, however. "There are no normal cues, she just stops talking," says Eyamie.

*A Lie of the Mind* is a departure from Shepard's past in some ways. There are less long pauses, and less physical action than in many of his past works. The action is largely emotional and verbal, and there is a lot of it. "The play never sits and rests," says Eyamie.

The day after this interview, the cast will enter full play rehearsals for the first time, instead of just doing scenes. "It's interesting to watch the rhythm of this play developing," says Eyamie. "We are developing its pacing, the aspects of anticipation. I am learning a lot from watching the rest of the cast work."

Because he is playing his first major dramatic role, *A Lie of the Mind* marks a departure for Eyamie. "I've done lots of comic

stuff, from storytellers to Neandathal Ewoks, (in last year's *Treehouse at the Edge of the World* at the Citadel) but I'm glad to explore the other side."

Phoenix Theatre's season opens Friday, October 23rd, with *A Lie of the Mind*, which runs until November 15th. Shows are Tuesday to Sunday at 8:00 p.m., with a 2:00 p.m. Sunday matinee, in the Kaasa Theatre, downstairs at the Jubel.



A Lie of the Mind portrays the survival of a relationship

Photo: Gordon Ed Ellis