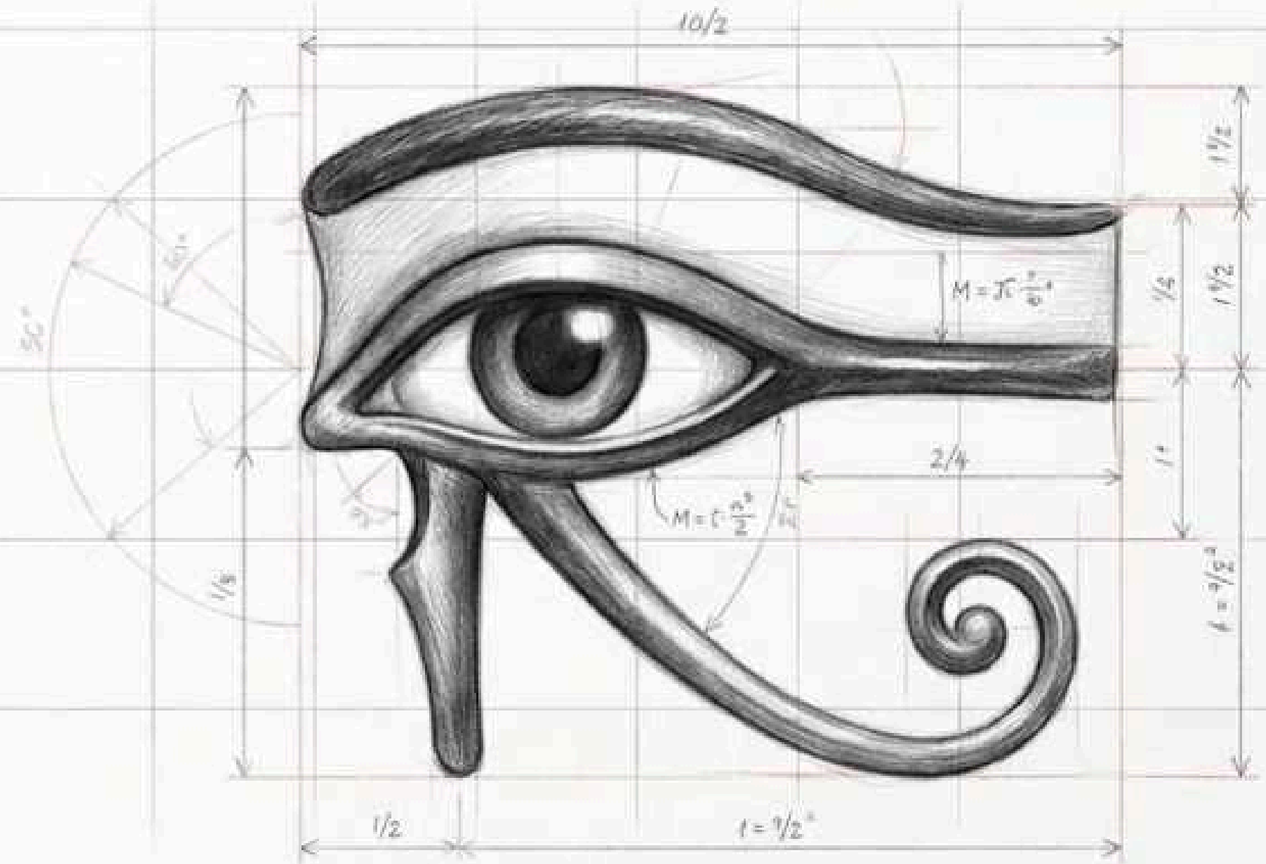
¶ 2.1

Art for Eternity

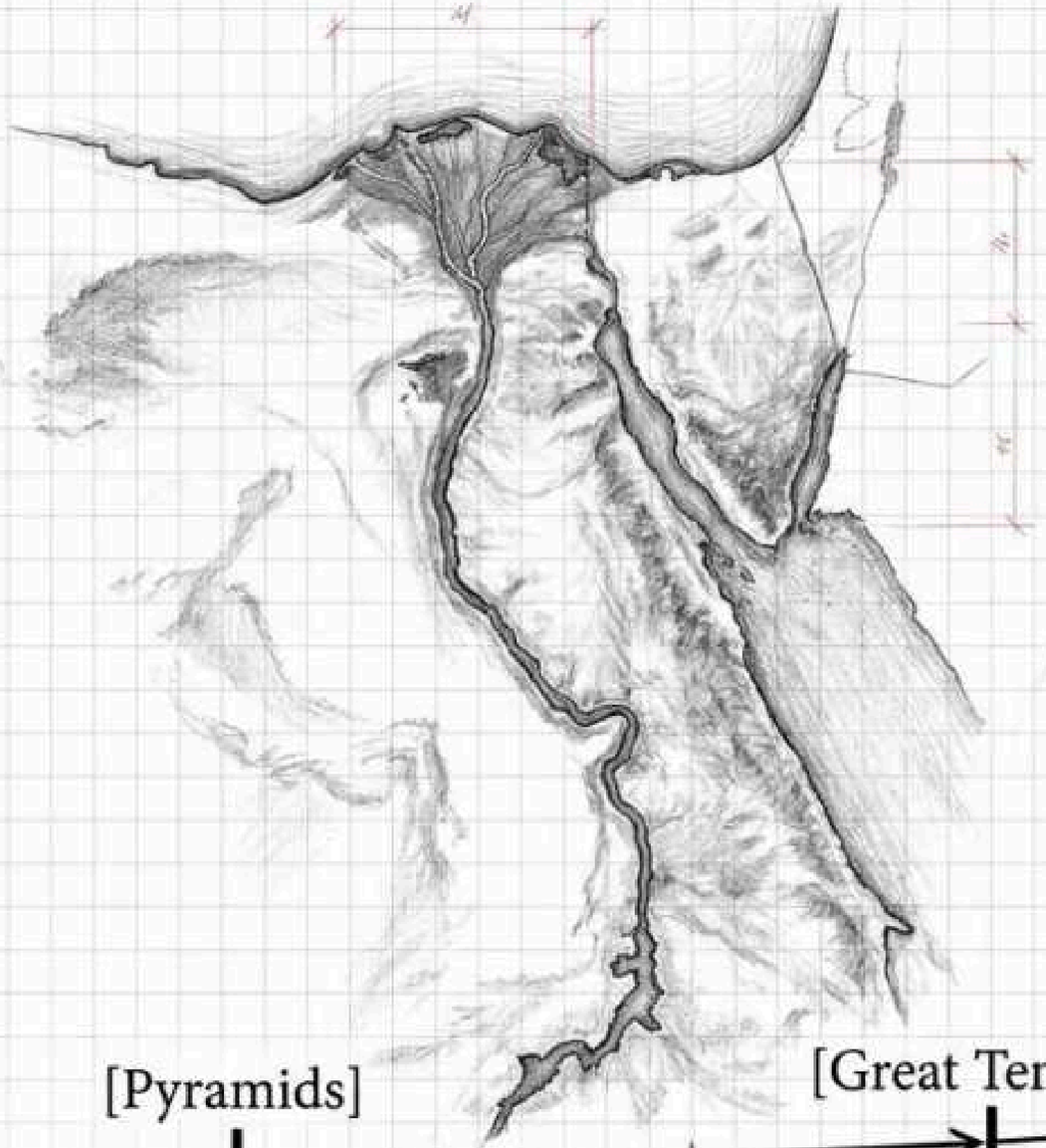
Lecture 2: Ancient Egypt



Topics: The Ka | The Composite View | The Pyramids | Amarna & Tutankhamun

Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.2



3,000 Years of
Recognizable Character.

[Pyramids]

[Great Temples]

[Amarna Period]

[Tutankhamun]

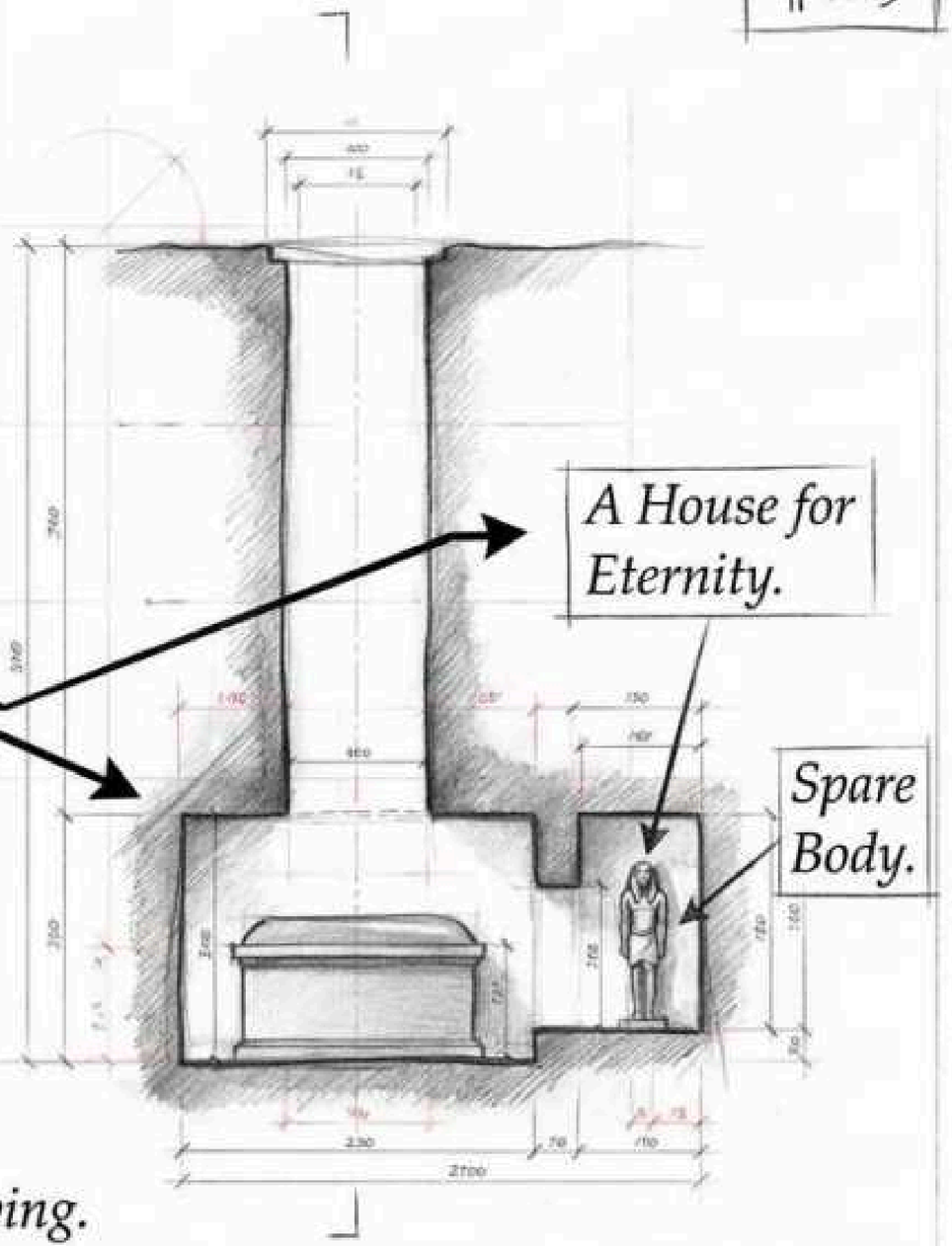
3,000-Year Timeline

Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.3

Spirit *(The Ka)* needs:

[*Preserved Body*]
+
[*Offerings*]
+
[*Spare Body (Statue)*]
=
Survival of the Ka



Art in Egypt was a working tool, not made to be admired by the living.

Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.4

Unification:
Crown of Upper Egypt
+ Crown of Lower Egypt.

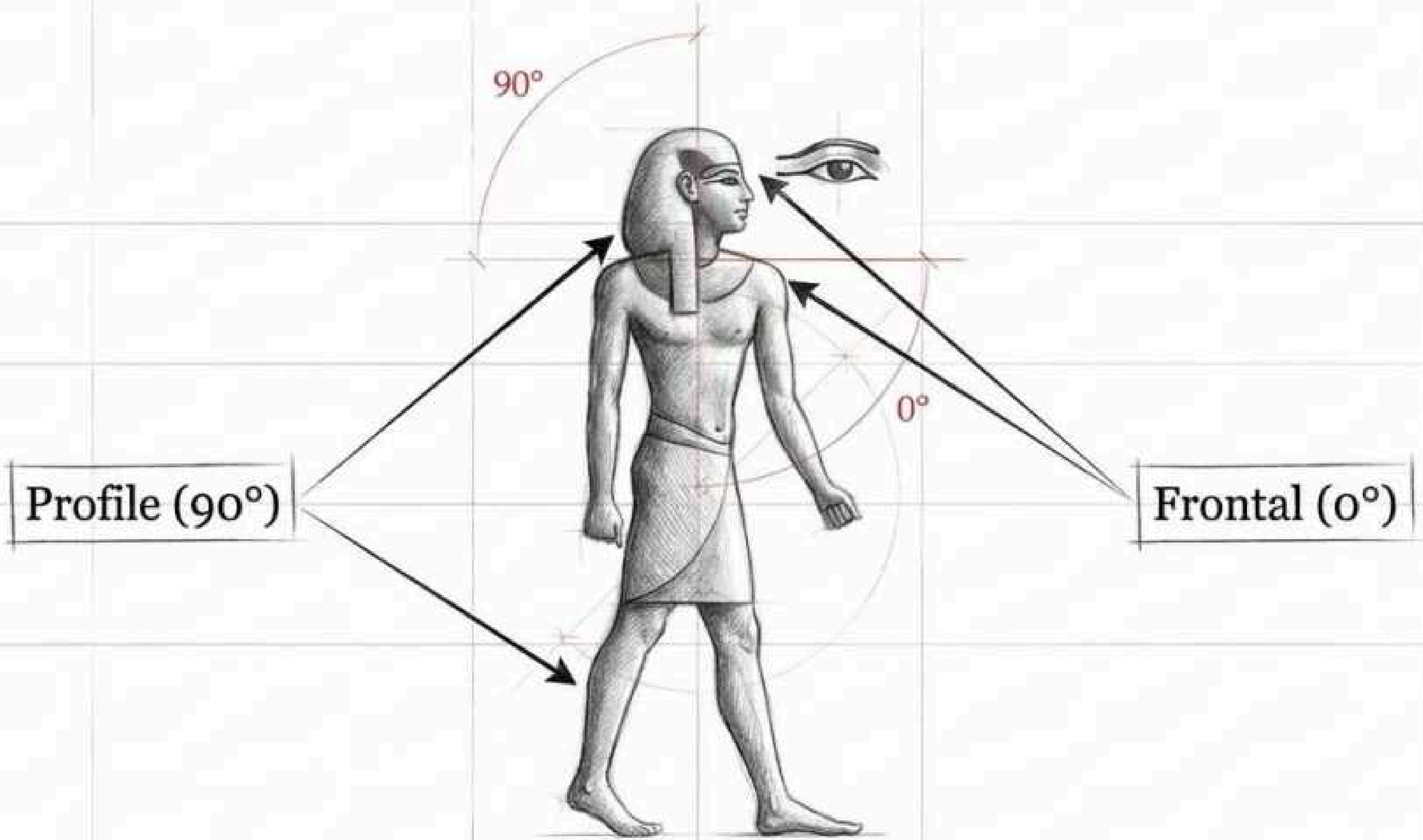


Hierarchical Scale:
King > Subjects.

Organization:
Arranged in
horizontal registers
(Mesopotamian style).

Date: ~3100 BCE.

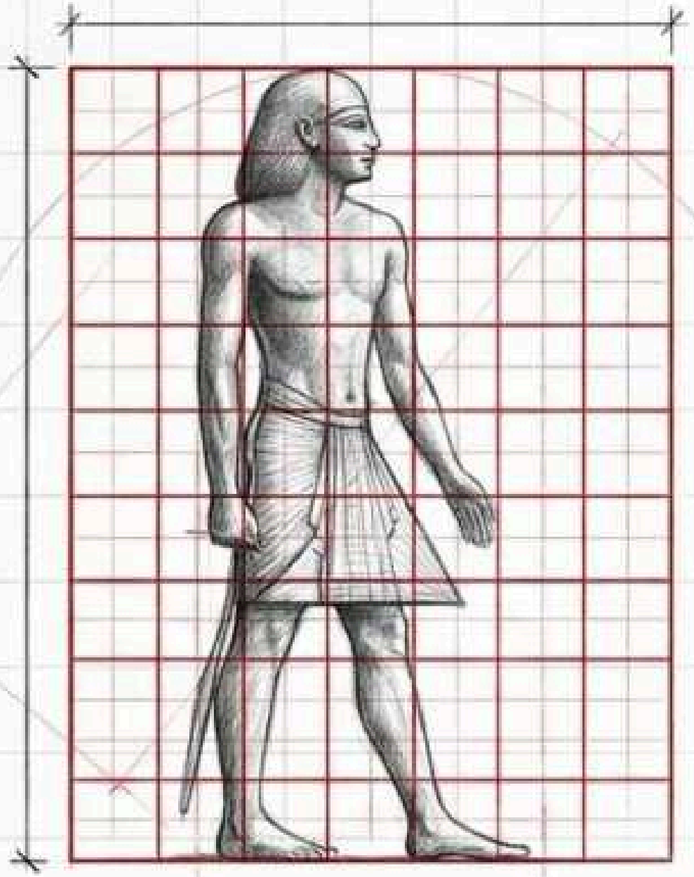
Gemini Notebook



Maximum Clarity = Complete Record

Not a failure of skill. Shows each part of the body from the angle where it is clearest.

Gemini Notebook



The Grid: Ensures one artist's figure exactly matches another's.



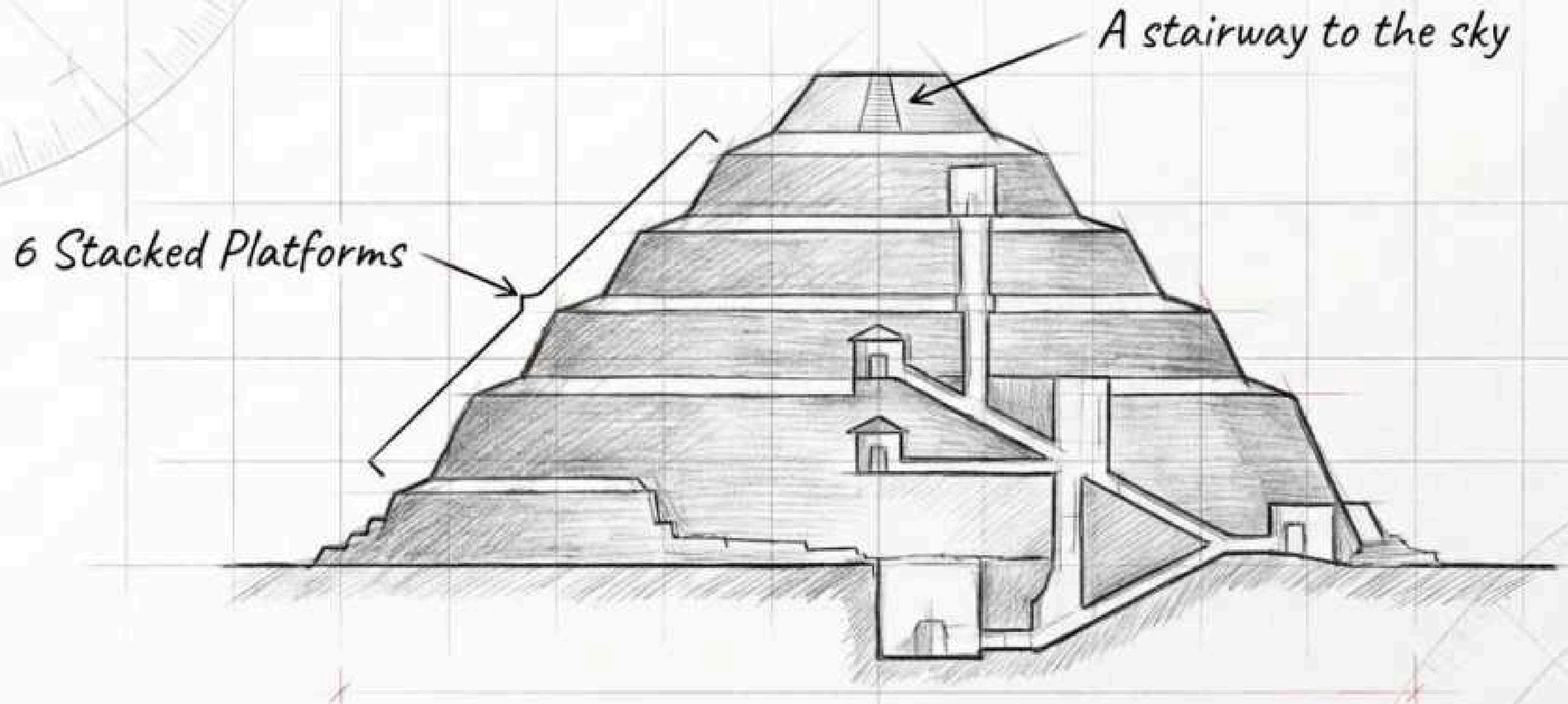
Found (1799) + *Champollion (1822)* = *Hieroglyphs Deciphered*

Color key	
Black	*= Fertile Soil / Rebirth*

Writing and image belonged together.

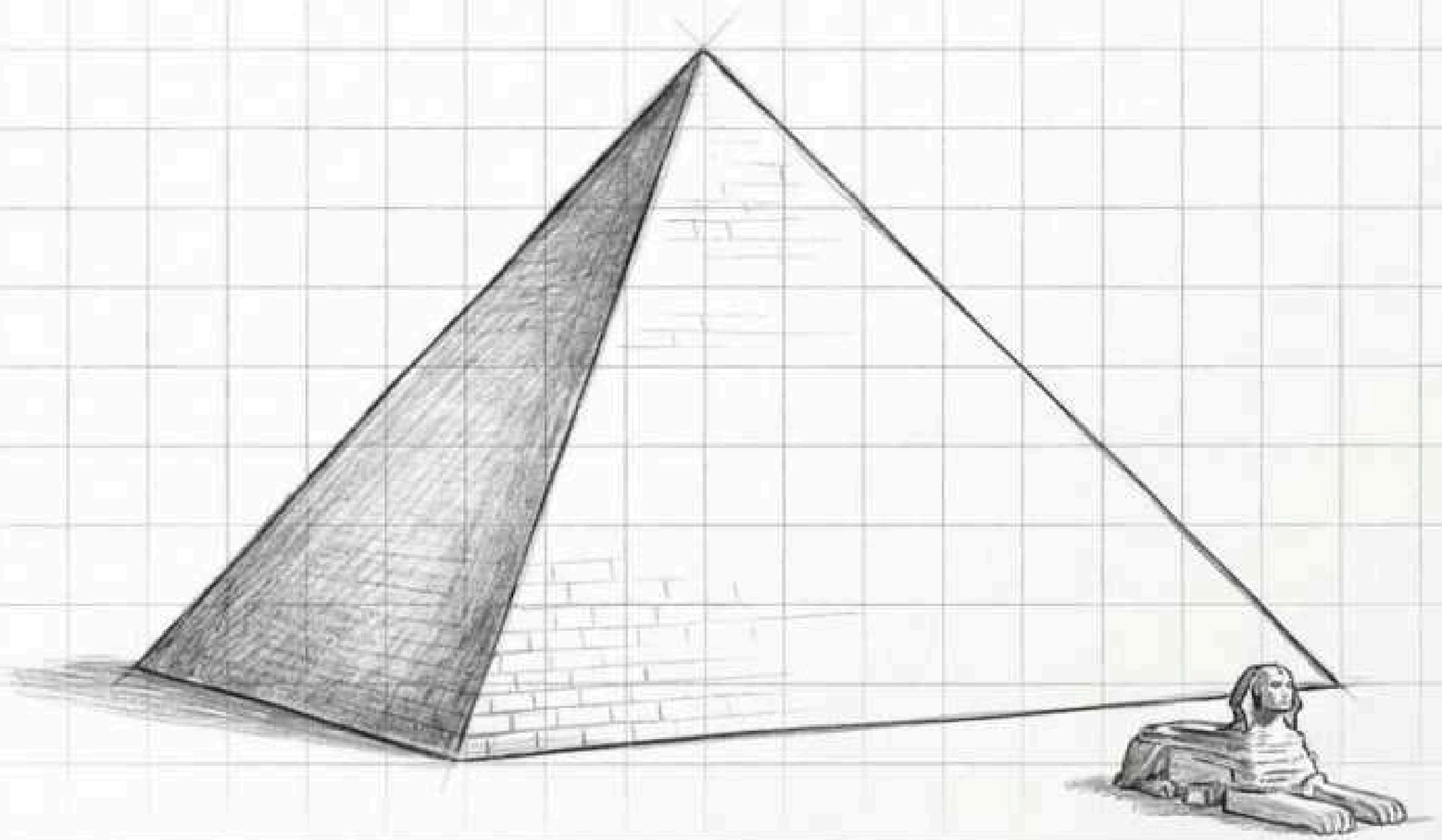
Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.7



Architect:	*Imhotep*
Status:	*Architect → Wise Man → Worshipped*
Date:	*~2650 BCE (First large stone building known)*

Gemini Notebook



Date:
~2560 BCE

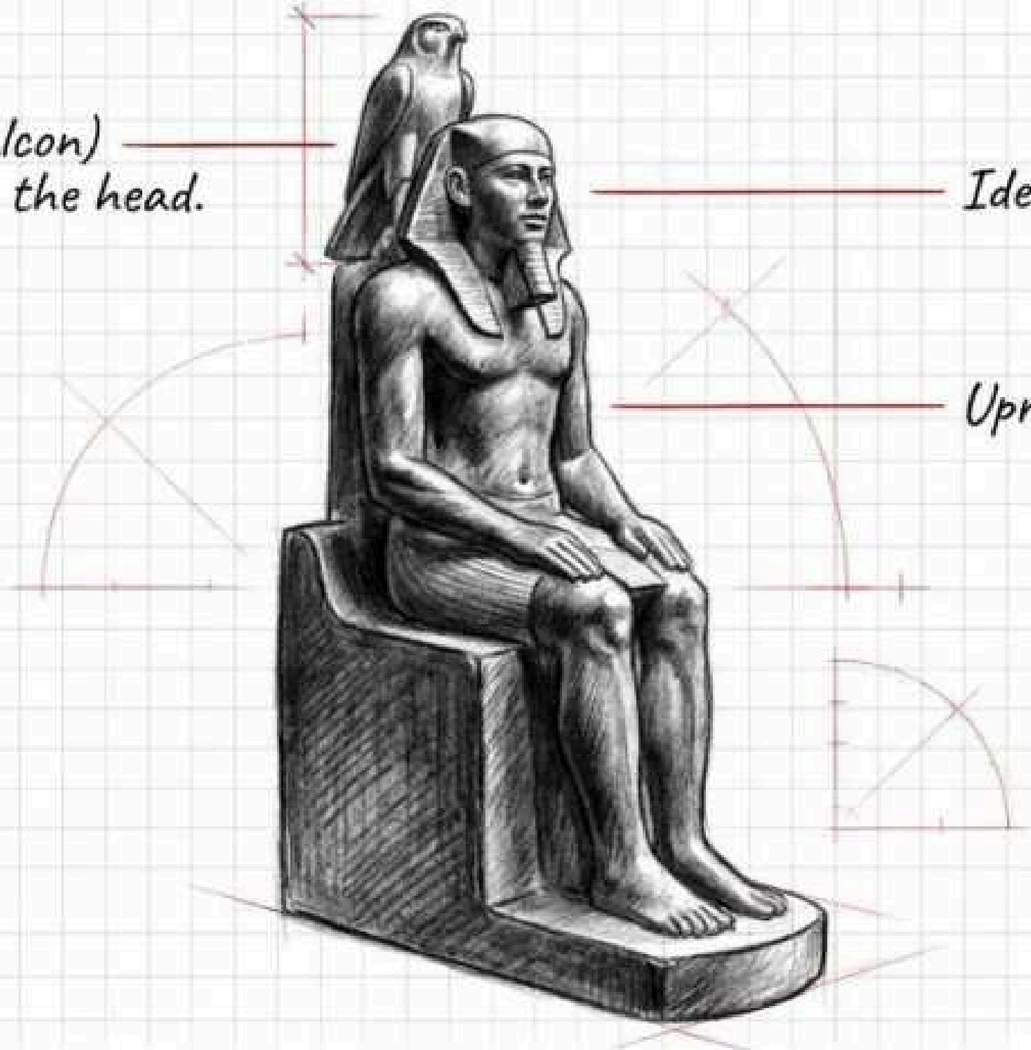
Height:
~146 Metres

Mass:
~2.33 Million Stone Blocks

Record:
Tallest human-made structure for ~4,000 years

Architecture built from stone to last.

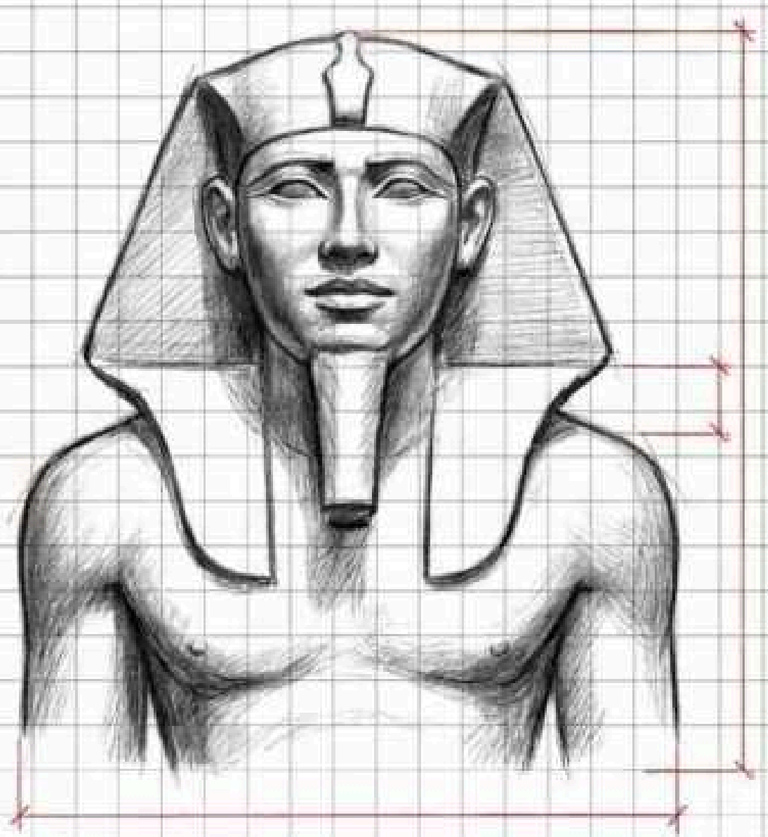
Gemini Notebook



A king who would be a god. Carved from hard diorite (~2500 BCE) for absolute permanence.

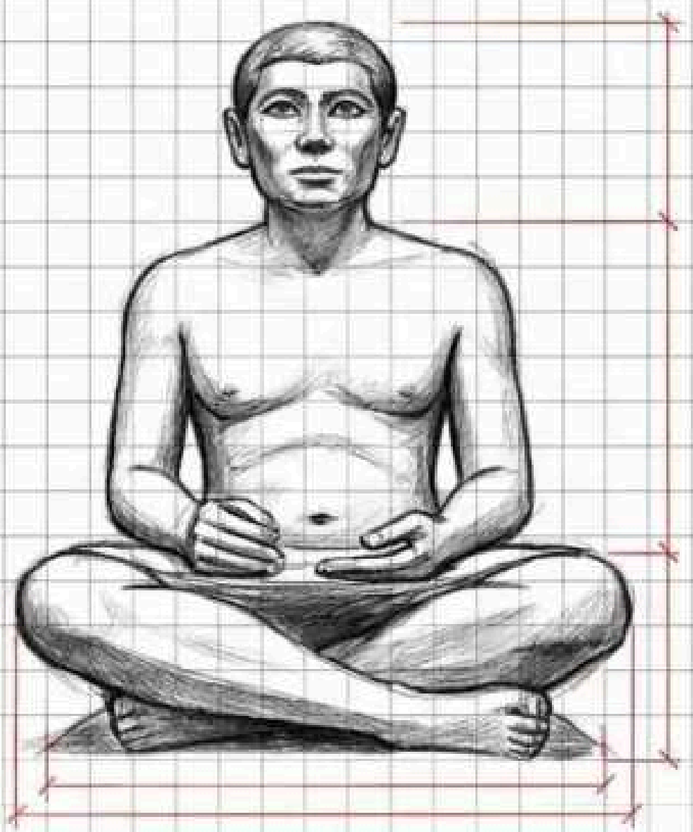
Gemini Notebook

The God-King (Khafre)



Material: Hard Diorite.
Form: Idealized & Permanent.

The Official (Seated Scribe)



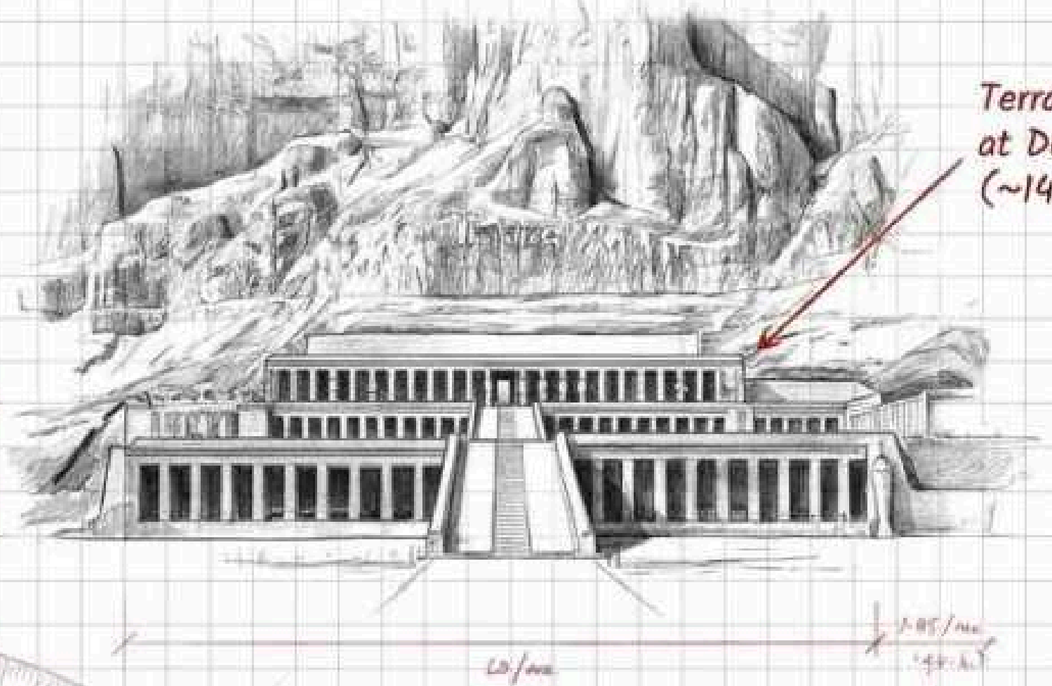
Date: ~2400 BCE (Louvre).
Form: Alert, inlaid eyes, softening/lifelike body.

Tomb wall scenes (farming, fishing, feasting) were NOT decoration—they supplied the dead with necessities for the afterlife.

Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.11

Era: New Kingdom (~1550 – 1070 BCE)
– Age of Empire & Giant Temples (e.g., Karnak)

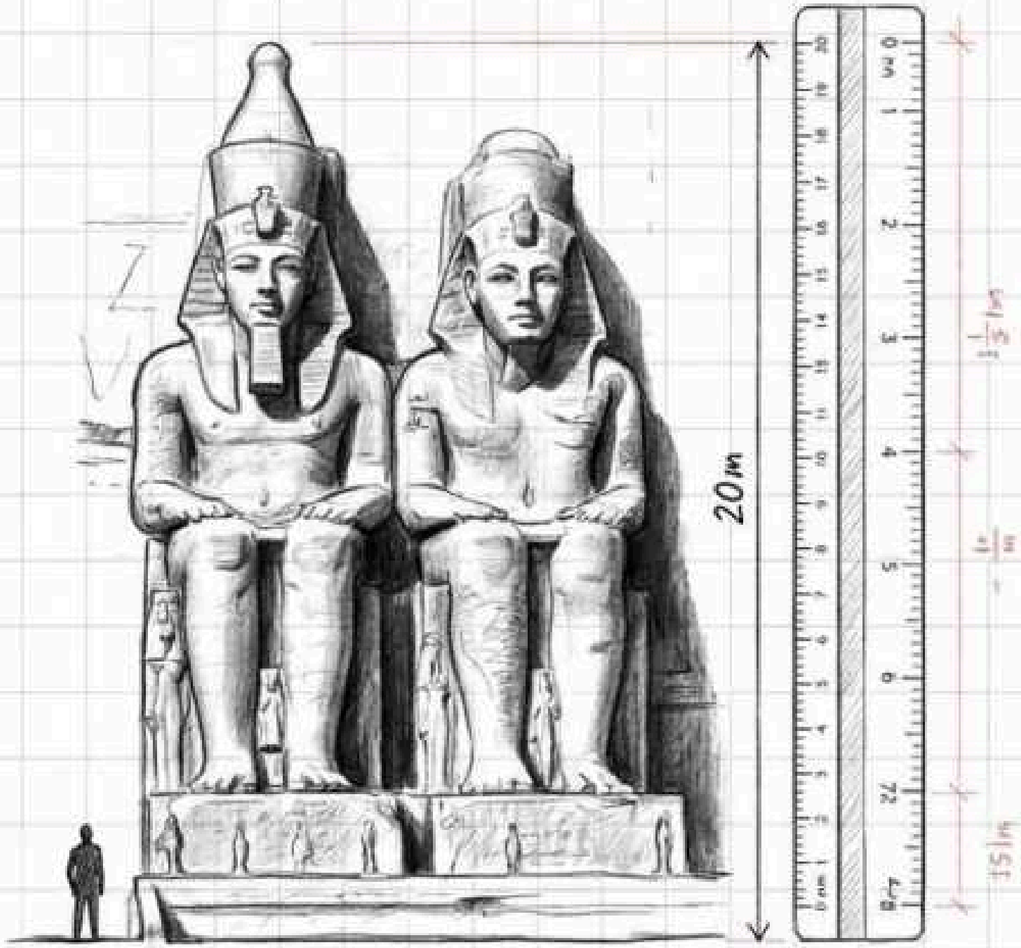




Role of Pharaoh ⇨ Biological Sex of Ruler

The convention of kingship mattered more than the sex of the king.

Gemini Notebook



Temple of Abu Simbel ordered by Ramesses II (~1264 BCE).

1. **Threat:** Rising waters from Aswan High Dam.

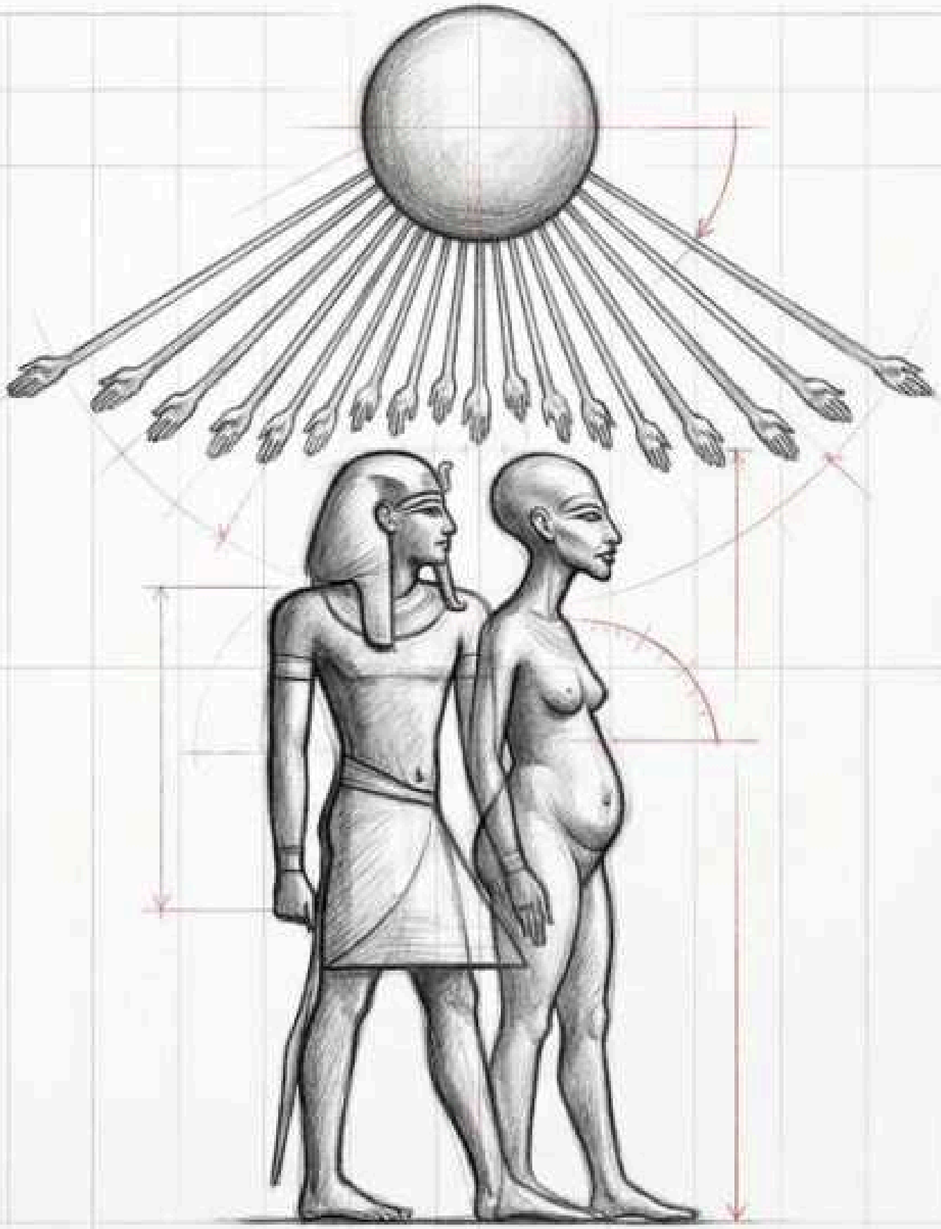
↓

2. **Action:** Cut temple into stone blocks.

↓

3. **Result:** Rebuilt on higher ground by international rescue.

Gemini Notebook

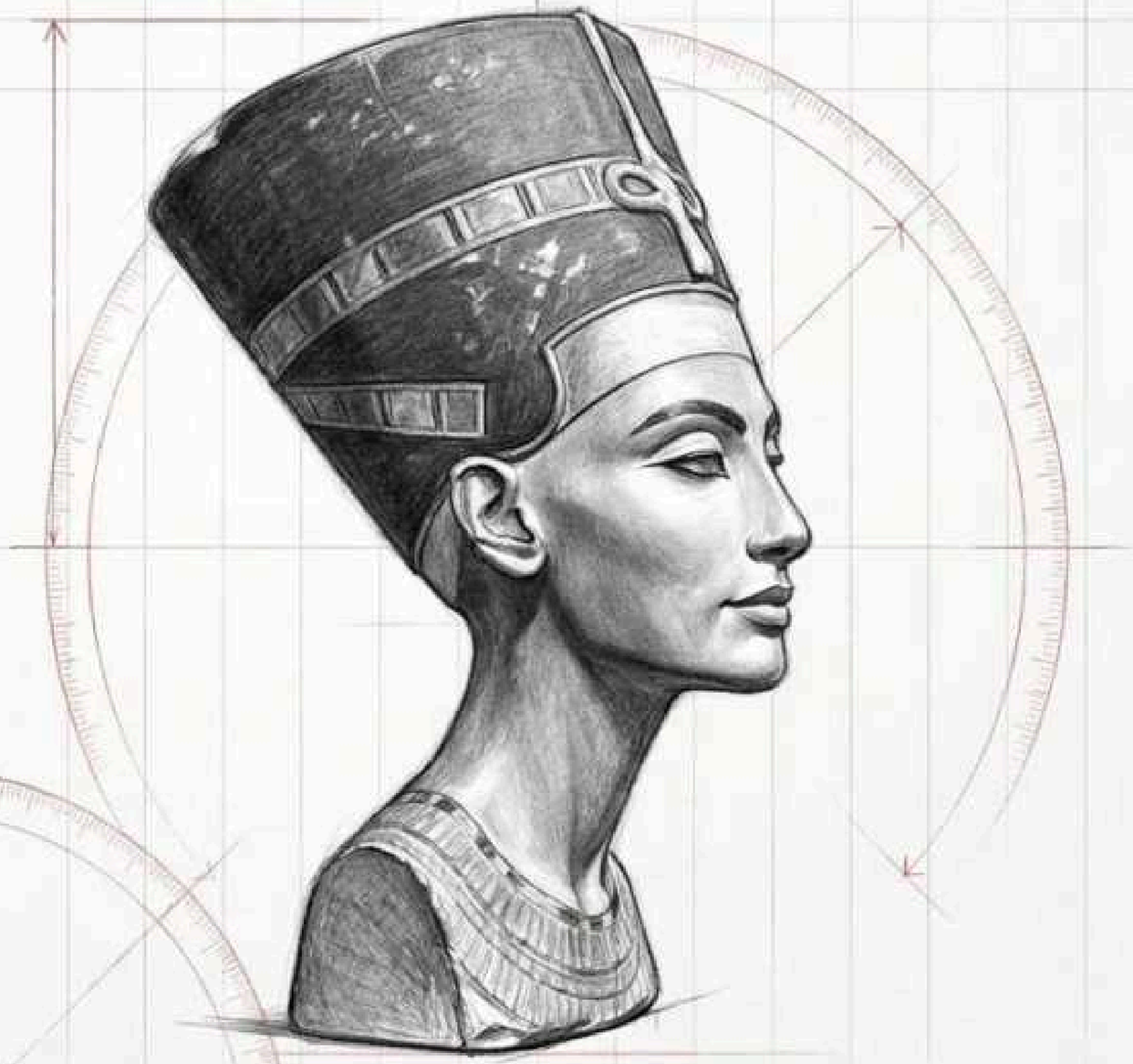


New Rules (*Akhenaten, ~1353 to 1336 BCE*):

- [x] Worship: Single god (Aten, the sun disk).
- [x] Anatomy: Long faces, thin necks, soft bellies, wide hips.
- [x] Subject Matter: Family scenes (royal couple playing with daughters).

One reign broke the rules. Scholars still debate the reasons.

Gemini Notebook



Creation: Workshop of sculptor Thutmose at Amarna.

↓

Found: 1912 (by German team led by Ludwig Borchardt).

↓

Current Location: Berlin.

↓

✳ **Status:** Disputed (Egypt requests return).

The most famous work of the period shows how art history is entangled with politics.

Gemini Notebook

Post-Akhenaten:
Return to old gods + old style.

Subject: Tutankhamun (Died ~1323 BCE).

Discovery: Hidden small tomb
found by Howard Carter (1922).

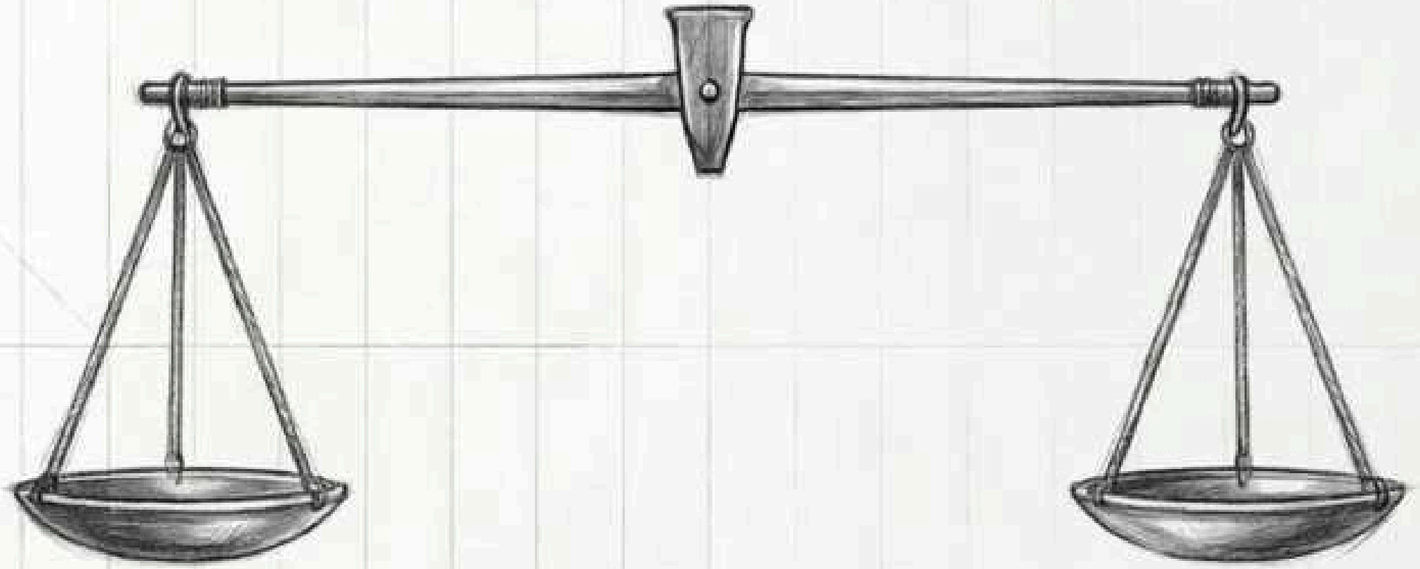
Material Data: Funerary mask =
~10 kilograms of gold.



One of the best-known objects in the world.

Gemini Notebook

Maat = Order and Balance



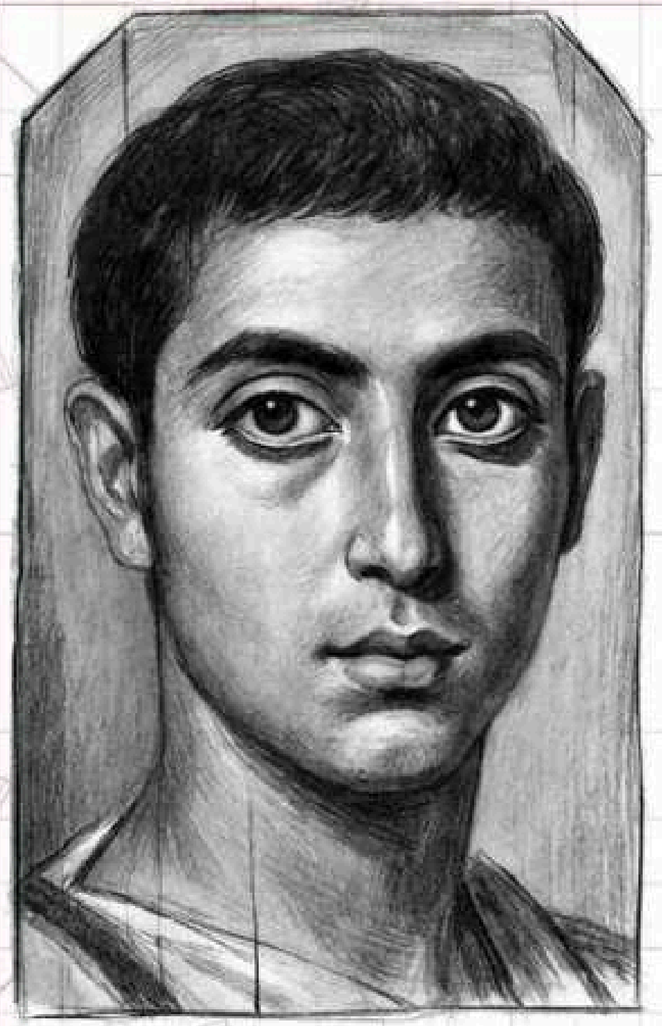
Art = Tool for keeping the world in order (Change is suspect)

Core Thesis: Stability ≠ Lack of Ability. Stability = A Choice.

Why did Egyptian art stay so stable? Pharaonic rule ended with the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE, but the style was an intentional continuum.

Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.17



Conquest: Alexander the Great (332 BCE) + Roman Rule

[Greek/Roman Lifelike Painting on Wood] + [Egyptian Mummy Burial Custom] = The Fayum Portraits

Traditions continued under foreign rulers. The individual faces and large eyes look startlingly modern to the eye.

Gemini Notebook

The ultimate question for this lecture.

¶ 2.18



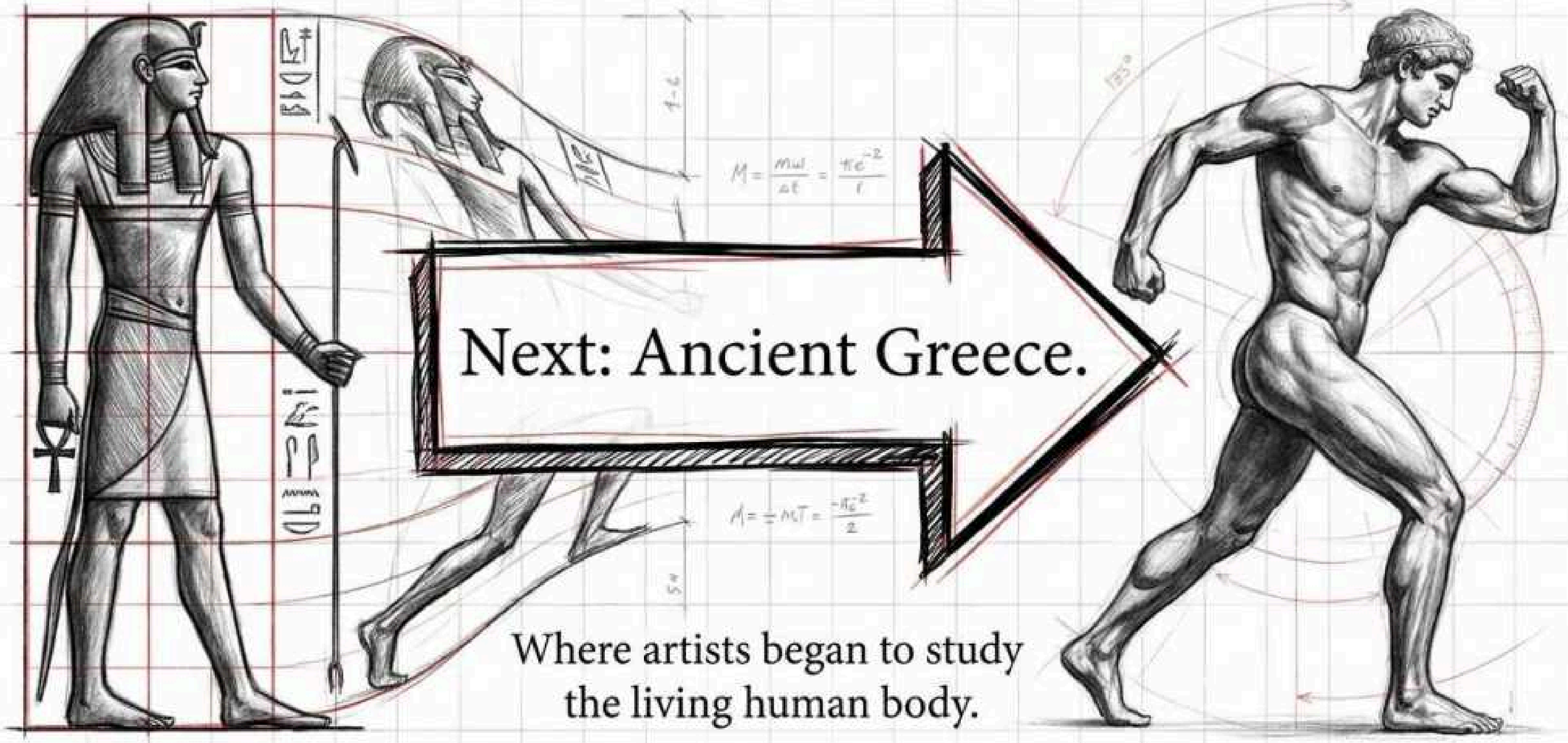
1. Who was it made for?

2. What was it supposed to do?

3. Would it still do that job if it stood behind glass in a museum?

Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.19



Gemini Notebook