

# A GODDESS REDISCOVERED: DAVID AARON UNVEILS MASTERPIECE OF ANCIENT EGYPT AT FRIEZE MASTERS 2025

Wednesday 10 September, 2025

**London, UK-** Leading London antiquities dealership **David Aaron Ltd** is proud to announce the exhibition of a remarkable rediscovery at this year's **Frieze Masters** (15–19 October, The Regent's Park, London, UK): a masterfully carved Egyptian statue, long misattributed and overlooked, now revealed to be a true masterpiece of Late Period sculpture.

Titled ***A Goddess Rediscovered***, the exhibition centres around a powerful and enigmatic bust of ***A Goddess by the Greywacke Master***, dated to the reign of Amasis II (570–526 B.C.), Dynasty XXVI. Carved from a fine dark stone called metagreywacke, the piece has emerged from decades of obscurity and misunderstanding to reclaim its place as one of the finest Egyptian sculptures of its kind in private hands today.

For over forty years, this striking head, elegantly carved, with serene features and a striated wig, lay hidden from public view in a private collection. When it resurfaced at a Gloucestershire auction in 2022, its oddly shiny surface and unusually preserved nose led some to dismiss it as a later imitation. The earliest known provenance at this time was its appearance in a Christie's sale in 1978 (Fine Antiquities, Christie's, London, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1978, Lot 387).

What followed was a forensic investigation by the team at David Aaron Ltd, together with scientists, conservators and Egyptologists that rewrote its story.

Firstly, earlier documented provenance was discovered when it was found to have been sold at a Hôtel Drouot sale in Paris, in 1923. With the head photographed in the sales catalogue.

Then, through a detailed study using scientific testing and restoration analysis, the team at David Aaron Ltd uncovered a fascinating journey: from Wadi Hammamat where the stone was quarried, to damage through iconoclasm, the restoration practices of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Italy to its appearance on the Parisian art market in 1923, and finally its misidentification in modern times.

*"It is a sculpture that has many stories,"* says **Salomon Aaron**, Director of David Aaron Ltd. *"One is of ancient Egypt, when master sculptors produced perfected forms of divinity and Royalty, then the resulting iconoclasm that came from the end of the Dynasty and a turbulent change of power. Later the Italian restoration workshops of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lastly of the early modern art market, where the desire to 'perfect' antiquities often led to dramatic interventions, in this case a dark grey overpainting. Now, by removing those additions, we can see the original goddess and Egyptian masterpiece emerge once again."*

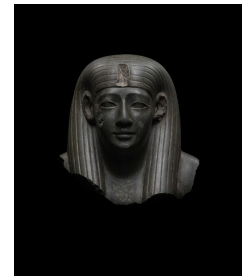
Advanced material analysis, including optical petrography, SEM imaging and X-ray spectrometry, confirmed the stone as Egyptian metagreywacke, highly prized in the Late Period for sculptures of royal and divine figures. A meticulous study of toolmarks revealed how a section from the back of the original statue was reworked into a replacement nose during the 18th century, the original having been lost in antiquity. This restoration, although technically impressive, is now massively outdated and would never happen in today's restoration workshops, resulting in doubts being cast on the sculpture's authenticity for a generation.

The goddess figure, once hidden under wax, pigment, and speculation, has now been professionally de-restored, with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century nose sympathetically reattached. Recent scholarship has even linked the bust to a known corpus of works, attributed to an ancient Egyptian workshop or artist known as the "Greywacke Master".

***A Goddess Rediscovered*** will be the centrepiece of the David Aaron stand at **Frieze Masters 2025**, stand

**C02**, inviting curators, collectors, and scholars alike to engage with an object that bridges thousands of years of artistic tradition, restoration history, and connoisseurship.

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