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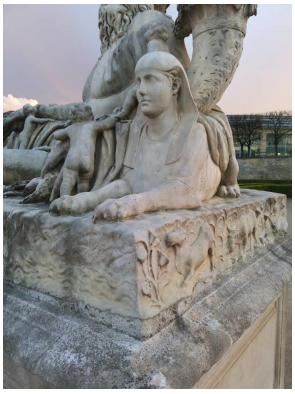
Moorish smoking room from the John D. Rockefeller House, palmiform capitals typical of Egyptomania motifs, 1864-1865, Brooklyn Museum, New York.



Percier (1764–1838) & Jacob-Desmalter (1770–1841), silver mounts by Biennais (1764–1843), after the drawings by Vivant Denon (1747–1825), Coin cabinet, 1809–19, Mahogany, applied and inlaid sil



19th century Egyptomania style fireplace in Jaune de Sienne Marble. Detail of the entablature is carved with a solar winged disk protected by a double-headed eagle, symbol



Lorenzo Ottoni (1658–1736), The Nile, 1688-1692. Copy commissioned by Louis XIV, of a Greco-Roman statue in the Isis temple, which was exposed at the Vatican.

Egyptomania is a unique phenomenon in Western art, it sprung from the fascination for **Pharaoh's Egypt culture and history**. This taste appears regularly in history. During Roman times, Egyptian items are also present in the first cabinets of curiosities of the 16th and 17th century. But it was during the **French campaign in Egypt (1798-1801)** that the art of the pharaohs begins to fascinate artists and collectors. This fascination continues to this day, for example with the *Louvre pyramid* inaugurated in 1989, or the one at the *Luxor Hotel* in Las Vegas, opened in 1993.

Egypt had already inspired Rome with sculptures and obelisks, which would then be rediscovered with great interest in France and Italy during the Renaissance. But it was in the early 18th century that Egyptomania really took off, under the influence of **Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768)**, the great neoclassicism theorist. During the Enlightenment in France, antiquity became the goal to reach and therefor decorative motifs of Egyptian origin were used in furniture and interior decorations. Egypt was then associated to travel, exoticism and the mysteries of the Orient.

With the French campaign in Egypt of Napoleon in the early 19th century, Egyptomania completely invaded the decorative arts, it was especially associated with the **Empire Style**.
Dominique Vivant Denon (1747-1825), director of the *Museum Central des Arts* (future Louvre), embarked in Toulon with Napoleon. This trip inspired him the *Illustrated Travel Chronicles*, this book received an unanimous success. From this moment, fountains with pharaonic motifs, hieroglyphics patterns, small obelisks and pyramids, invaded decorative arts in France to celebrate Napoleon's victories.

In 1822, **Jean François Champollion (1790-1832)** deciphered hieroglyphics, at that time he was the young curator of the Egyptian collection at the Louvre Museum. More and more discoveries were made on the Nile and Egyptology became scientific. The Egyptomania took an ever more important part in the decorative arts, since it was taking advantage of the progress of this emerging science. Egyptomania motifs oscillated between documentary rigor and fantasy. The *Champollion Egyptian vase* made in Sèvres porcelain, preserved in the Château de Compiègne is a perfect illustration. It was designed by **François-Hubert BARBIN (1786-1857)** - and painted by the porcelain painter Jean-Charles Develly (1783-1862) - who wanted a convincing result and therefor contacted directly Champollion to help him. The Sèvres factory also produces a large number of table settings with Egyptian-decor, such as the beautiful *tea service of the Empress Josephine*.

The painters also used these Egyptology discoveries in their work to produce a pharaonic atmosphere, often combined with biblical episodes. Those pieces of art were free from any glorification of Napoleon's military campaign.
During the 19th century, Egyptomania affected all forms of creation, here are some exemples : *Aida* (an opera created for the Suez Canal), the Academic art paintings **Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904)**), furnitures, fireplaces and all the decorative arts in general.

In November 1922, in the middle of the **Art Deco** style domination, the discovery of the *tomb of Tutankhamun* made Egyptomania fashionable again. Its motifs and paterns invaded the world of fashion and advertising.
Later on, the **50's cinema** revisited Egyptomania's codes. Afamous exemple is *Cleopatra* with the beautiful **Elizabeth Taylor**, an enormous Hollywood production, considered as one of the most expensive movie of all time.

See also

Empire style — Neoclassicism — Le sphinx — Orientalism — 1867 World's Fair — 1889 World's Fair — Émile Gallé — Art Deco style

See our 19th-century objets d'art



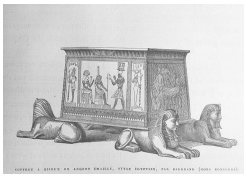
Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) as Cleopatra, about 1891.



Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), Bonaparte before the Sphinx, 1867-1868, oil on canvas, Hearst Castle, San Simeon (California).



Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), Egyptomania style fireplace, engraving from the Collection “Diverse Ways of ornamenting chimneypieces and all other parts of houses taken from Egyptian, Et



Enamelled silver jewelry box by BAUGRAND. Egyptian style. Universal Exposition of 1867 in Paris.