

ALEXANDRIA

71. Portrait of a man

Alexandria. Kom el-Dikka

1st century BC – 1st century AD

H. 21.5 cm, W. 14.5 cm, black granite

Ismailia Museum, Inv. No. 2758

A powerfully expressive portrait head of an elderly man, the effect dramatized even further by a striking whitish feldspar vein crossing the temple and face. It is a strong but gaunt face, its severity emphasized by the four deep wrinkles on the forehead, the heavy bags under the eyes and the vertical furrows running from the nose to the corners of a wide, thin-lipped mouth. The lidded eyes are round and deep-set under fairly heavy brows. Short curly hair fits the head like a cap; it is cut off straight above the forehead. The broken underside of the neck and the remains of a backpillar leave no doubt that the piece had once been part of a near to life-size statue.

This masterful portrait head bears a resemblance to a group of statues from the Late Period, some of which depicted priests (e.g. statue of Horsahor). They were executed in a similarly hard stone. Individual portrait features and the artistic manner bring to mind a Graeco-Roman, most likely Alexandrian workshop.

G.M.

