

## 3005

### *King Senwosret III*

**James Romano:** The first object you see when you enter the gallery is a granite statue of the 12th Dynasty king Senwosret III. Now walk around him. You can recognize that this is a king by a number of distinct symbols. His headdress, for example, which we call a nemes, seems to be some sort of elaborate kerchief. Only kings wore that. On his head is a cobra we call a uraeus. Again, this is something that only royalty and gods wear.

Senwosret is seated. This is a very traditional static pose that you will find throughout Egyptian art, from the earliest sculpture to the very latest. He also stares straight ahead. That formal element is characteristic of Egyptian sculpture. You'll also notice, under the king's feet there are nine strange objects. These represent bows, such as in a bow and arrow. Each one represents one of the traditional nine enemies of the Egyptian kingdom. They are ground underfoot, literally, on statues of kings.

As you walk through the galleries, you will see that most Egyptian statues have very placid faces. They are, if you will, lifeless masks that give no hint of the personality of the individual represented. At the time this statue was carved, however, around 1825 B.C., artists were experimenting with a new, more natural way of depicting the human form.

Look at Senwosret's face. Notice that his eyelids are very heavy. He has deep creases across his face. There's a notch between his lower lip and his chin. This is a heavy, haggard face. It would be good if we could say Senwosret III looked that way because of the climate of the times. We don't know. I personally think that that is the reason for this extraordinarily impressive and, if you will, pessimistic face.