

3225

Cartonnage of Nespanetjerenpere

Richard Fazzini: This mummy case, or cartonnage, shows the deceased as “mummiform”—looking like a mummy. It associates the dead person with the god Osiris, who was murdered by his brother, the god Seth, and revived by his wife, the goddess Isis. From the Middle Kingdom onwards people could hope to sort of become like Osiris after death: they could resurrect also.

This cartonnage does a lot more than that. On its back, which is the part with the body lying against it or right above it, there are two gods, Horus and Thoth, and they’re propping up a *djed*-pillar. And that’s a symbol of Osiris.

If you look at the front of the coffin, it has a solar deity with a ram’s head and the sun disk on top of it and wings spreading out over it, so there’s a solar deity protecting the dead person.

Chester Higgins: If I had a choice of which container that I want my body to be buried in, I would chose the cartonnage. For a couple of reasons. One because there’s a sense of intimacy to the body. There’s no waste of space, unlike the caskets that we’re buried in today. But also, from a spiritual point of view, you’re wrapped up in the religious scripture that is necessary to allow you to go forward into the afterworld. And then because you have the sculpture of what the deceased looked like. But it also captures your sense of what you’re focused on in the future that’s in front of you.