

On Sept. 9, UK auction house will sell one of the earliest known depictions of ancient technology

*Profusely-detailed 4,500-year-old
Egyptian limestone panel shows deity*

Ptah overseeing copper-smelting process, with hieroglyphic dialogue amongst workers

HARWICH, ESSEX, UNITED KINGDOM, September 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 4,500 years ago – 2,500 years before the birth of Christ –

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The panel is comparable to an example shown in the book *The Scepter of Egypt* and described as having come from the tomb of Re-em-kuy.”

*Aaron Hammond, Chief
Operating Officer, TimeLine
Auctions*

Egyptians possessed the ability to smelt, i.e., extract metal from its ore by heating and melting it. We know this to be true because the highly-advanced civilization that also engineered colossal structures, developed hieroglyphics, mathematics and sophisticated irrigation systems documented their mastery of the practice in the form of art. In particular, a [limestone bas-relief panel](#) to be auctioned on September 9 at [TimeLine Auctions](#) in England both visually and hieroglyphically confirms the fact that ancient Egyptians were adept at smelting.

From the Old Kingdom, 5th Dynasty, 2498-2345 BC, the expertly-carved panel is one of the earliest known depictions of ancient technology of any type. Three male figures appear in the exceptionally well-detailed scene, one of them representing Ptah, patron deity of craftsmen and architects. Each of them has a short hairstyle and wears a kilt tied at the waist. The left and central figures carry a small furnace by its curved handles as they prepare to smelt copper. The central figure also holds a metal poker, while a secondary figure supports a large container at chest level with one hand.

The finely-rendered hieroglyphic inscriptions appearing in front of each figure record a dialogue among the three metalworkers. The leftmost figure, who faces the others, declares “Ptah could not have done better.” The central figure responds with three lines of text which translate to “Ptah loves him to pour (into) the brazier of the flame.” The inscription before the figure at farthest right reads “copper of the baskets.” Together, the second and third texts may be interpreted as “Ptah would love him to pour copper from the baskets into the furnace.” The composition likely formed part of a larger scene illustrating metalworking activities.

It is notable that the panel was created in bas-relief fashion, meaning it was carved on the inside to render a finished scene visible on the outside surface. Measuring 53cm (20.0in) wide by 53.34cm (21in) high and weighing 21.35kg (47lbs 1oz), the panel is comparable to an example seen in W.C. Hayes' *The Scepter of Egypt*. The book example is described as having come from the tomb of Re-em-kuy.



Egyptian limestone bas-relief panel depicting Ptah presiding over the smelting of copper. Old Kingdom, 5th Dynasty, 2498-2345 B.C. One of the earliest known depictions of ancient technology. Estimate: £80,000-£100,000/\$107,160-\$133,950

The panel to be auctioned on September 9 has a distinguished line of former ownership that includes Touric Arakji (Hamburg, Germany), who acquired it around or before 1980; Sotheby's June 8, 1994 auction in New York; and subsequent London gallery and private collections. It will convey to the winning auction bidder together with an academic report prepared by Egyptologist Sylvie Caroff and is expected to sell for £80,000-£100,000 (\$107,160-\$133,950).

TimeLine's Sept. 9-13, 2025 Ancient Art, Antiquities, Collectables & Natural History Auction will be held live at the company's headquarters located at The Court House, 363 Main Rd., Harwich, Essex CO12 4DN, UK. The Egyptian panel will be sold during the September 9 opening session. Internet bidders may pre-register online. Goods may be previewed in person at the gallery by prior arrangement only.

Auction start time: 12 noon GMT (7am US Eastern Time). All remote forms of bidding will be available, including absentee, by phone (please book phone line 48 hours ahead of time), or live via the Internet through TimeLine's bidding platform or LiveAuctioneers. TimeLine Auctions accepts payments in GBP and ships worldwide. Questions: call +44 7494 866514 or email Aaron Hammond at ah@timelineauctions.com. Online: <https://timelineauctions.com>.

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