

# COLOSSAL STATUES OF A PTOLEMAIC RULING COUPLE



This royal couple of a king and queen in pink granite is by far the best preserved of the large Pharaonic-style images that exist of Ptolemaic rulers. Their role is the same as that of the colossi erected by the kings of the New Kingdom before the façades of divine temples. The king watched over the temple and displayed himself in his greatness so

that his subjects could worship him. The most useful parallel is that of the colossi of Ramses II and his great wife Nefertari, sculpted on the façade of the small temple of Abu Simbel.

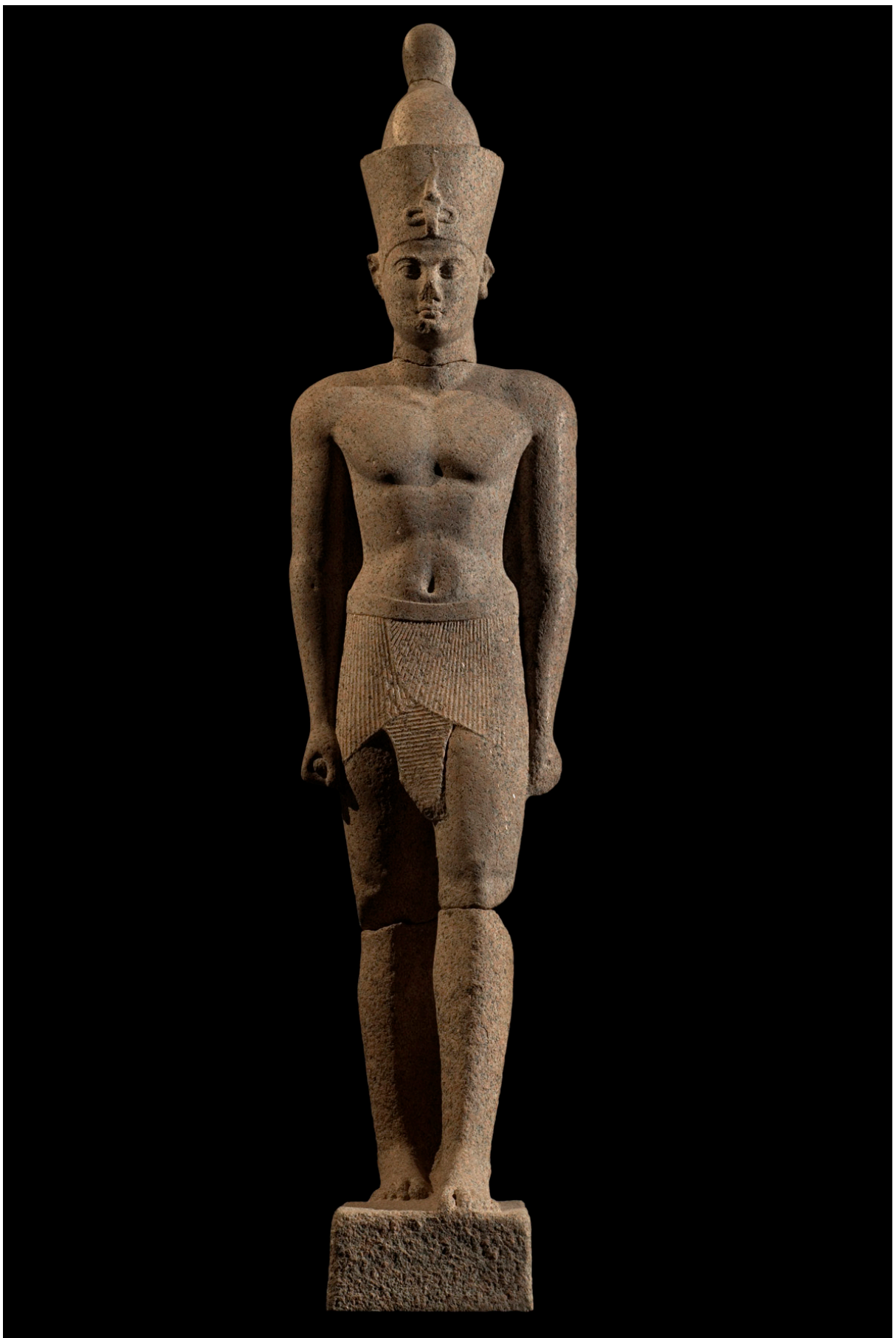
## Colossus of a King Crowned

Found in five separate pieces and measuring five metres tall, the king is practically complete. His arms fall alongside his body. His right fist holds the enigmatic small cylinder which Egyptian statuary always placed in the hands of important men.



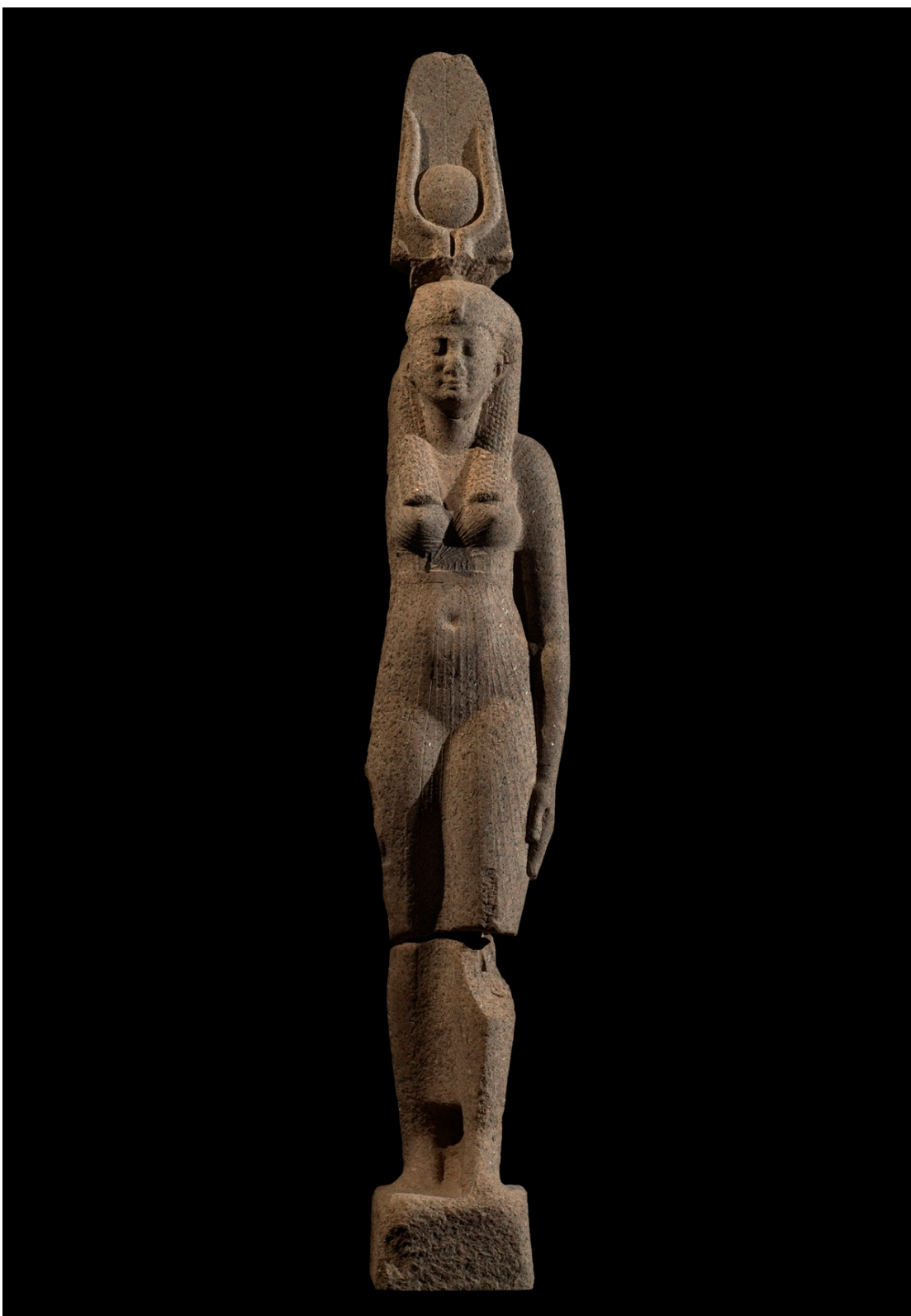


His dress is extremely simple and classical. He wears on his head the pschent (double crown) adorned on the front with the uraeus cobra whose body is schematized in the shape of two lateral rings.



## Colossus of a Queen as Isis

The queen's body was found broken into three fragments whose edges fitted one another. The disappearance of the left knee can be attributed to an accidental breakage. The right shoulder and arm are completely missing. This mutilation probably is the result of deliberate human action.



The Hathoric crown (cow horns, sun disc and feathers), worn by royal wives, was made separately. Following tradition, the woman puts her left leg forward, hindered by her dress. The queen wears the classical tripartite wig with minutely detailed braids. A single uraeus, represented by only the extended front part of the cobra's body, rises in the middle of the forehead. The queen's body is moulded in the usual, finely pleated dress, which ends just above the ankles.

## **Milestone in history of iconography of deities**

The colossal couple from Thonis-Heracleion constitutes an important milestone in the history of the iconography of the Greco-Macedonian dynasty and in the iconography of deities in general. In their general type and style of dress, these two colossi are imitations of Ramesside models and borrow no details or signs from Hellenic iconography. Only a few details and some delicate touches in the sculpting reveal Ptolemaic art.

# From Seabed to the Grand Egyptian Museum

The colossal couple was discovered by the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology (IEASM) directed by Franck Goddio during research in the sunken city of Thonis-Heracleion. It was found close to the temple of Amun. After restoration and study works the couple formed part of traveling exhibitions in Europe, Asia and the US. In 2020 it returned to its home land of Egypt to be displayed permanently in the new Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza.

**Objects:** Pink granite, Ptolemaic Period, 323-30 BC, Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), Giza (SCA 279, 280)

**Source:** Original description by Pr. Jean Yoyotte in exhibition catalogue Egypt's Sunken Treasures, Berlin, 2006, exh. Egypt's Sunken Treasures, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, May - September 2006

**Photos:** Christoph Gerigk © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation