

Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst (SMÄK)
Corinthium Aes
The Secret of Black Copper

Run Time: March 18th to September 14th, 2025

Images: <https://my.hidrive.com/share/4pwin1bc3x>

The inaugural studio exhibition for the newly-refurbished “Cube” is dedicated to the mysterious “Corinthian Aes”. The name of this alloy, “Corinthium ore” alludes to the city of Corinth, which was known as a centre of production in Antiquity. Classical authors such as Pliny and Plutarch expounded on the beauty of the valuable “Corinthian ore”. In Ancient Egypt, the material was known as early as the 2nd millennium BCE as “black copper”. Objects made of Corinthium Aes are characterized by a deep-violet patina that can be almost black, which, if scratched or damaged, reforms through skin contact, due to its reaction to the chemicals in our sweat. In Ancient Egypt, it was used exclusively for luxurious cult items and divine figures. The objects were often enriched with a metal-on-metal technique called damascening, a refined artisanal method for inlaying gold, silver and other metals.

In Antiquity, people were fascinated by the unusual characteristics of Corinthium Aes. Over time, its origin became shrouded in myth and legend as the manufacturing techniques for this precious metal were lost. Until Matthias Lehr, a goldsmith from Nürnberg, successfully uncovered its secrets and reconstructed the valuable material, in tandem with archaeologist Alessandra Giumlia-Mair.

The exhibition was curated by Olivia Zorn and Rebekka Pabst, both from the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection in Berlin, and reworked for its presentation in Munich.

State Museum of Egyptian Art (SMÄK)

Gabelsbergerstraße 35
80333 Munich

Opening hours: Tuesdays 10:00-20:00 (8 PM), Wednesdays-Sundays 10:00-18:00 (6 PM)

For opening hours during bank holidays, see website

Admission fees: Adults 7 Euros/ reduced 5 Euro / Children and adolescents under 18 free