



BRONZE
Dyn. XVIII-XIX

The Petrie Museum in University College London (020 7504 2884) has one of the largest and most inspiring collections of Egyptian archaeology anywhere in the world, but it is largely a hidden treasure. Its founder, William Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), intended it should be used for teaching and study. To mark the Millennium, the museum has invited artist Mark Karasick to use its collection as the basis for a site-specific installation. The resulting work - traces - running until June 3, explores both ancient and modern technology. It takes its inspiration from many aspects of the museum's unusual collection, subverting time and drawing on our fascination with ancient civilisations. The 30 canvases which make up the installation are created from a selection of everyday objects from ancient Egypt which have undergone the modern process of radiography. The x-ray film of each object has then been encapsulated in wax using Karasick's version of the 2000-year-old technique, encaustic. In this suspended state between past and present the objects take on a new identity and life. Each piece is connected visually by wire and light and linked to the original artefact using an inventory number.

The centrepiece of - traces - is a modern encaustic portrait of Petrie himself aged ten, long before he realised his vocation, inventoried and resting alongside portraits of people who died thousands of years ago...

roundup



Work like an Egyptian

space has never urged its readers to visit a more hideous building than the Petrie Museum, housed "temporarily" for the past 50 years in a scrofulous, leaking former mews off Gower Street. Trust us, and persevere like Theseus following Ariadne's clue into the Minotaur's lair. It's stuffed with treasures, especially this month, with Mark Karasick's extraordinary installation. Flinders Petrie was the archaeologist who virtually invented scientific excavation in late-19th century Egypt, treasuring scraps equally with the golden face masks of the pharaohs. Karasick,

was so taken with the stunning portraits Petrie excavated, painted in pigmented wax to cover the heads of the dead, that he began working in encaustic wax himself. For this work, *Traces*, he x-rayed 30 small domestic objects from the museum, encasing the x-rays in layers of encaustic. When the x-rays glow from within the wax, they eerily light the real objects in their cases. The Petrie has never done anything remotely like this before. Galleries chuck the word "unique" around like snuff at a wake: this exhibition really is. *Maev Kennedy Traces, Petrie Museum, Malet Place,*