

# The Treasures of Coptic Art: in the Coptic Museum and Churches of Old Cairo

Gawdat Gabra, Marianne Eaton-Krauss



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Egypt's Coptic Church is one of the oldest in the world, with a cultural tradition dating back two millennia, during which time churches have been built and a variety of distinctive art forms have flourished. The world's largest and most exquisite collection of Coptic artifacts is now housed in the Coptic Museum, founded in Old Cairo in 1908. Here for the first time, in this lavishly illustrated book, more than one hundred of the greatest treasures of the Coptic Museum have been beautifully photographed to present an overview of this rich artistic heritage. Objects from churches and monasteries across Egypt include some of the finest examples of Coptic icons, stelae, sculptures, wall paintings, wooden altar screens, metal crosses, censers, liturgical implements and vestments, chandeliers, and bible caskets. Besides being objects of great craftsmanship and beauty, these artifacts, which range in date from the third to the nineteenth centuries, represent indispensable material for the study of the origins and development of Coptic art, as well as its relations with the ancient Egyptian, Byzantine, and Islamic traditions. Textiles, ceramics, terracotta, ivory and bone carvings, and documents (including the famous Nag Hammadi Gnostic library from the fourth century, one of the most valuable collections of papyri in the world) provide invaluable insights into the economic and social life of Egypt over the past two thousand years. In addition to objects from the Coptic Museum, this book also includes photographs of surrounding churches, some of Egypt's oldest, that illustrate the architectural legacy of the Copts. The accompanying text and captions provide a description of Coptic civilization in general and Coptic art in particular.

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