

CHAPTER 14

WALL PAINTINGS FROM THE BRIDGE IN THE CENTRAL CITY

by

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14.1 Introduction

Since the excavations of Petrie, the EES, and others at Amarna, much of the recovered painted plaster from the walls, floors, and ceilings of buildings has been inadequately published. As part of an extensive project funded principally by a Leverhulme Research Fellowship (with supplementary grants from the British Academy and Wainwright Fund), my work has been to amass information to create a research archive on these fragments, and to prepare fuller reports on the paintings from the various parts of the site. Two studies, on the painted pavements and wall paintings in the so-called North Harem of the Great Palace, have already been published (Weatherhead 1992, 1994). Three more (covering painted surfaces in the North Riverside Palace, North Palace, and the King's House) are awaiting publication. This, my sixth report, aims to bring to light several small fragments of painted wall-plaster from the Bridge in the Central City. This is the massively built mud-brick building which spanned the Royal Road and connected the Great Palace with the King's House.

Following his excavations of 1892, Petrie commented briefly on the design of the Bridge but did not record that any painted plaster was found there (Petrie 1894: 8). It was during the excavations of Pendlebury in 1931–2 that painted plaster was found at the Bridge. However, both the Bridge and its wall-plaster are only briefly described in the final report, with no illustrations of the fragments (*COA III*: 56).

The fragments have recently been located in museums by the author. Several, in Group A below, are in Liverpool Museum. These were sent in the 1970s, as part of a consignment of unprovenanced wall-plaster from the Wellcome Collection in London when this collection was broken up and dispersed. The Bridge fragments have now been identified and separated from other fragments, which come from the North Riverside Palace and the King's House. These two buildings were excavated in the same season, and the fragments from the three sources had evidently become mixed together (Weatherhead unpub. 2). A note in *COA III* that these fragments went to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, is wrong. Another group, Group B below, has been located in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Although few in number, the fragments give a clear indication of some of the decoration on the inner walls of the Bridge. This included a royal scene (group A), and a pond and garden scene (group B). As shown below, these may be connected. The presence of the paintings depicting royalty signifies the importance of the Bridge within the context of the royal buildings complex.

The Bridge was thought by Pendlebury to have contained an upper room with a Window of Appearances (*COA III*: 56, 78); this has been disputed (e.g. Kemp 1976: 83). In the reconstruction drawing of the Great Palace and Bridge by Lavers (*COA III*: Pl. II), the Bridge is shown with a room containing a window situated over a central carriageway, which has passages for pedestrians on either side. The fragments are reported as having mostly fallen into the eastern passage (*COA III*: 56). Fragments also fell into the western passage. These were stated to be very small and in such poor condition that the designs were not intelligible, and it is concluded that they were not kept. No fragments were reported in the central passage. Fragments recorded on the excavation photographs (31–32/O.81–O.82) are presumed to be the best and most recognisable fragments from the eastern passage. These show facsimile copies of the fragments made by one of the team members, but I have been unable so far to locate these facsimiles.

14.2 Precise origin of the fragments

The origin of the fragments is not an easy matter to work out, especially as the design of the upper storey of the Bridge is speculative. A likely source for the fragments, particularly as a royal scene is involved, would be from the proposed central room, but it is strange that no fragments fell directly underneath into the central passage, but only into the side passages. An obvious parallel for a painted upper room is to be found at Amarna, at the North Riverside Palace (Pendlebury 1931: 242ff; Pendlebury 1932: 143ff; Weatherhead unpub. 2). To judge from Lavers' reconstruction, the thinking at the time was that the walkways over the Bridge were covered but had open sides. This would obviously preclude wall-plaster coming from the sides, if the reconstruction is correct. Another possible suggestion, that on ground level the three openings were painted with designs, can probably be ruled out also; for a more durable material would be expected, such as carved reliefs as reported at the North Riverside Palace, or perhaps faience tiles, some fragments of which were found here (*COA* III: 69–70).

The fragments of wall-plaster are described below according to the two main designs. All have been reinforced on their backs with adhesive and scrim, on site or shortly after (this was useful in identifying the fragments in the museums). All the fragments listed below are shown on the EES photographs of the facsimiles, unless otherwise stated.

14.3 Group A: a royal scene

The most important pieces show two faces thought to be of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, possibly from the same scene and facing each other, and the standard accompaniment of the rays of the sun-disc. Pendlebury considered both faces to be portraits of the king, which is probably wrong, see no. 2 below. The background colour of all the designs is pale yellow. A standard composition is to be expected, such as the family scenes depicted on stelae (Stevenson Smith 1981: Figs. 301–2). Part of a wall-painting showing a family scene, the famous "Princesses" panel, was found by Petrie in the nearby King's House (Petrie 1894: 15, 23, Pl.1.12). Another possibility would be a Window of Appearance scene, such as that in the tombs of Meryre II and Parennefer, see no.3 below (*RT* II Pl. XXXIV; *RT* VI: Pl. IV).

1. Male Face. This fragment shows the top part of a face facing right, with eyebrow and eye outlined in black, and the white lower part of a crown (Figures 14.1–2). On the EES photograph 31–32/O.81 most of this design is shown intact. Unfortunately, since the fragment was copied and photographed, it has broken into six pieces. These have been reassembled by the author in the museum, and a new fragment (shown separately on the photograph) depicting part of the crown has been joined onto it. Of note is the masterly precision of the outline of the eye and eyebrow. A fine line marking the eyelid can just be seen. The crown is outlined with a thin red/brown line, and, at the edge of the temple, are the fine beginnings of the hair emerging from under the crown.

Not enough of the fragments survive to enable one to reconstruct the face, but the scale is definitely larger than the more complete second face (see no. 2 below). The white lower part of the crown has a small amount of yellow on it which is difficult to explain. This yellow gives the appearance of shading, but shading is unknown in Amarna-Period art. Alternatively, this yellow could be the remains of a yellow wash over white, and thus indicate that the fillet had been a gold colour. This in turn could mean that it was part of a blue crown, the upper part of which is missing. This is the usual crown worn by Akhenaten in official scenes. Another factor pointing to this being a blue crown is the absence of a uraeus, which would have been present at the base of a white crown; on the proposed blue crown it would be positioned above the fillet, in the area missing on the fragment.

Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.527G.

Max. width: across assembled fragments: 10.4 cm.

2. Female face. The fragment shows a face facing left, which is thought to be female and probably Nefertiti (Figure 14.3). Again, the eye and eyebrow are delicately outlined in black, but, in this case, elegantly extended. The adhesive which has been used to stick the pieces on to scrim

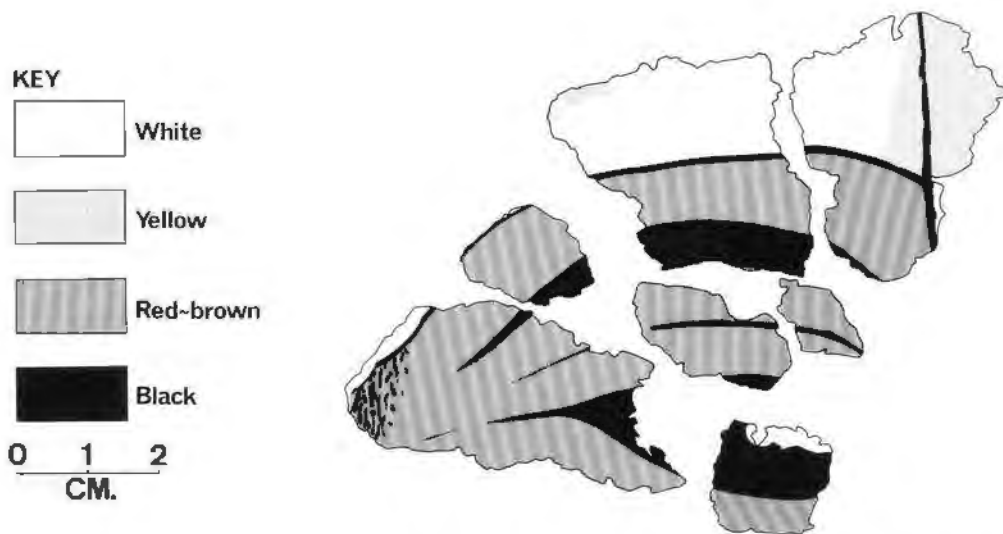


Figure 14.1. Fragments showing the King's face. Actual size. The figure outlines are in red-brown; the eye, eyebrow, and traces of hair are black.

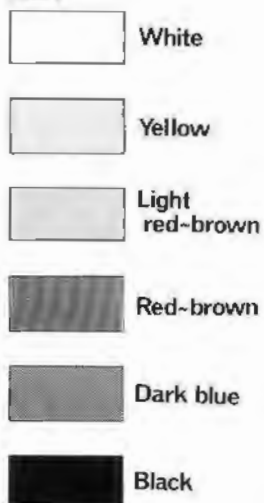


Figure 14.2. Fragments showing the King's face. Photographed in Liverpool Museum. For clarity, the fragments have been re-positioned and separated from the background.

and a card has unfortunately come through on to the surface, discolouring the skin tone to a dark colour; but, in patches where this has not happened, the skin is of a paler colour than on the face discussed above (no.1), suggesting the figure is female (Figure 14.4). The eyelid and jaw line are faintly outlined in dark skin colour. Another feature denoting that the face is female, and probably Nefertiti is the earring, since kings are not normally depicted wearing earrings (Aldred 1971: 230). The earring appears to be a disc rather than a penannular ring shape, as it has a solid centre. A white strip below the main part indicates that decorated tassels were attached. The main part is divided into black (or possibly discoloured blue) and cream sections, imitating contrasting materials. These continue into the central area of the earring.

The reassembled fragment showing the earring has been stuck in the wrong place by one of the excavators, and the design is thus misaligned. In order to bring the jawline into a more convincing position, it needs to be brought down lower. This has been repositioned in the

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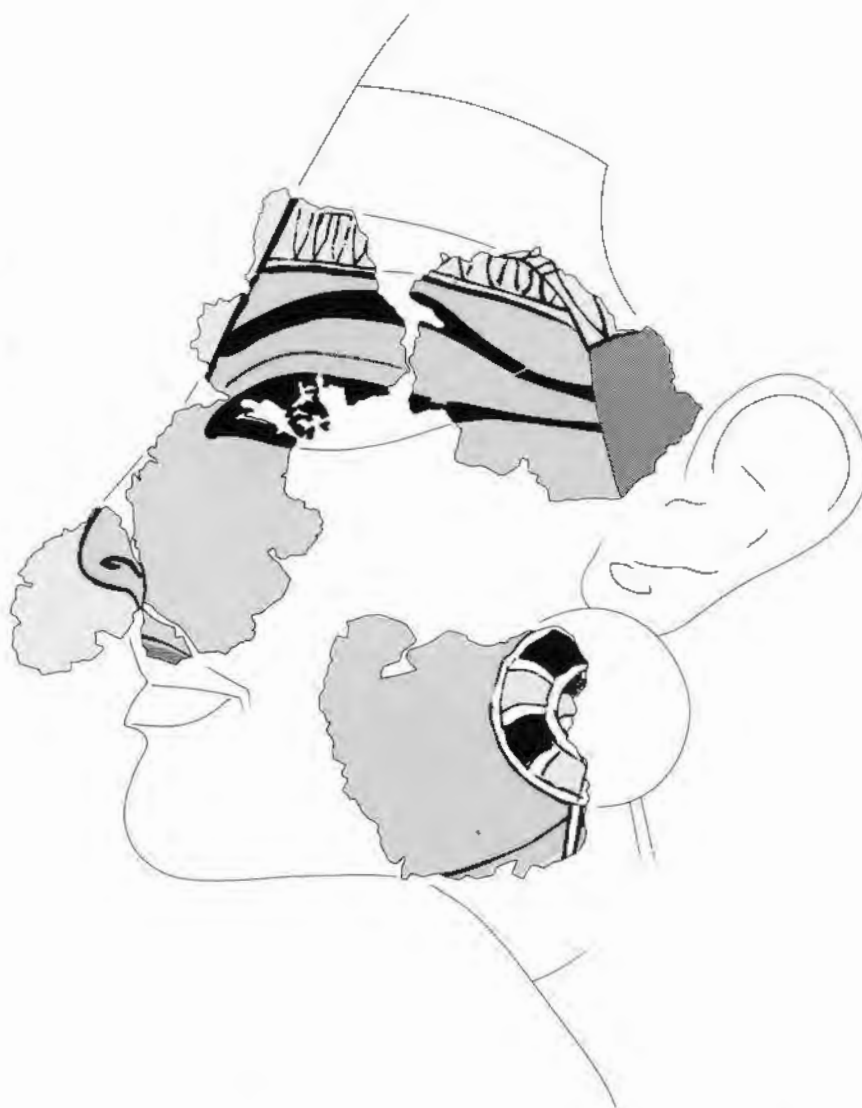


Figure 14.3. Fragments showing the Queen's face. Actual size. All outlines in red-brown, the eye and eyebrow are black.

reconstructed drawing (Figures 14.3, 14.5). On the drawing, the lower part of the face has been based on the outline of Nefertiti's face shown on a sculptor's model relief (Aldred 1980: Pl. 139).

The blue area at the edge of the temple implies that the figure wore a blue crown. This could be the blue head-dress, uniquely worn by Nefertiti. The fillet at the base of the crown is unusually elaborate and close to the eyebrow; small leaves or petals (lotus?) are outlined in reddish-brown on a cream ground. It is an unusual shape where it approaches the ear.

Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.527G.

Max. width: 10.2 cm.

3. Hand with *ankh*. Two fragments have recently been joined which show a hand holding an *ankh*, with part of an unintelligible object nearby (Figure 14.6; these were shown separately on the early photograph, EES 31-32/O.81). From study of reliefs with royal scenes, the position of the *ankh* held by one of the sun's rays is expected to be near the nose of a royal figure, with the



Figure 14.4. Fragments showing the Queen's face. Photographed in Liverpool Museum. This shows the original positioning of the fragments with the incorrectly placed lower jaw area.

sun at the top of the scene. The fingers of the ray are usually shown on top of the bar of the *ankh*, and the thumb below. But this is not always the case, for instance, in a scene involving Tutankhamun, the fingers and thumb are reversed on the ray with the *ankh* (Edwards 1979: 40). The fragment from the Bridge could thus be angled either close to the figure on the right (no. 2) with fingers on top of the bar, or close to the figure on the left (no. 1) with thumb on top of the bar. If the fragment is close to the Nefertiti fragment, there is the problem of the unintelligible feature above the fingers, as the space between the ray holding the *ankh* and the ray above would normally be unoccupied. On the other hand, if the fragment is close to the Akhenaten fragment, then there is the possibility that the feature is placed between the two figures; this feature could then be interpreted as, for instance, part of an offerings or a *shebyu*-collar (Figure 14.5). This latter would indicate a Window of Appearance scene, as in the tomb of Meryre II (RT II: Pl. XXXIV). On the fragment the arc of short red and blue brush strokes could represent part of a collar composed of gold and coloured beads, such as that placed on the gold sarcophagus of Tutankhamun (Saleh and Sourouzian 1987: Pl. 175a).

Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.527G.
Max. width: 9.0 cm.

4. Part of a lotus collar or garland. This fragment (Figure 14.6) comes from a floral collar, either from the shoulder of a person, such as one of the two figures described above (no. 1 or 2), or from the decoration of offerings. The blue lotus petals point downwards, with a deeper blue infill between them. Part of a dark red band is below the petals. Traces of two triangular motifs occur clearly on the photograph of the copy, but on the present fragment these can barely be seen. They are interpreted as traces of ties from the collar.

Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.527G.
Max. width: 2.9 cm.

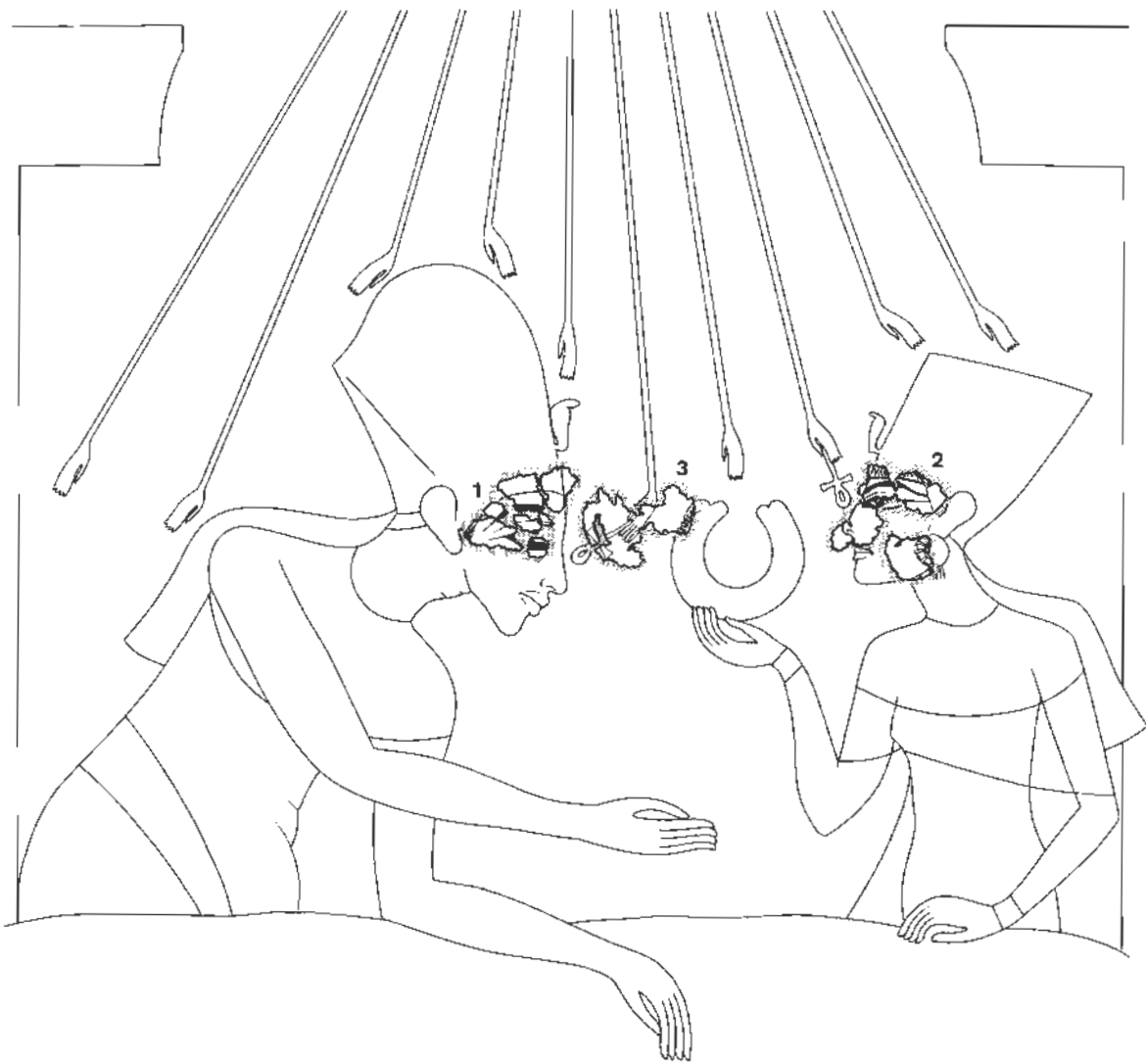


Figure 14.5. Reconstruction drawing showing the possible location of some of the fragments within a larger conjectural design. This design has been adapted from a Window of Appearances scene in the tomb of Meryre II (*RT II*: Pl. XXXIV).

5. A group of hieroglyphs. Pendlebury (*COA III*: 56) records fragments of a cartouche bearing the early form of the Aten name, and the names of Nefertiti and Ankhsepaaten. Only four fragments have been located, the same as those recorded on the excavation photograph, EES 31-32/O.81. These together do not represent Pendlebury's list of names, but may show part of one, an Aten cartouche, but whether the early or late form cannot be decided (cf. the discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 200-1). It would appear that he made an error, probably describing fragments of wall-plaster from the North Riverside Palace found in the same season (Weatherhead unpub. 2).¹ The four surviving fragments (Figure 14.6) are presumed to come from texts accompanying the royal scene. From part of three glyphs only the name of the Aten is recognisable.

¹ In *COA III*: 56, among the main designs listed as coming from the Bridge, is an "open-work stand with a necklace on it". Here again Pendlebury made an error, for this piece has been positively identified by the author as coming from the North Riverside Palace (Weatherhead unpub. 2).

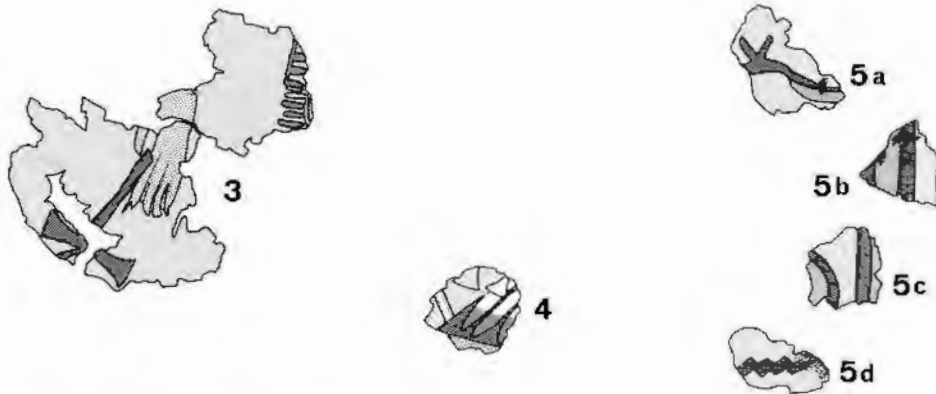


Figure 14.6. Smaller fragments which may be from the scene involving the royal figures. Half-size.

a. Fragment showing part of a horned-viper hieroglyph (*f*), painted in blue and turquoise. Max. width: 3.6 cm.

b. This fragment has similar paintwork to fragments a. and d., and is therefore grouped with them, although unintelligible itself. It shows a band striped blue-turquoise-blue, probably from the border of a cartouche, with a trace of blue a short distance away. Max. width: 2.4 cm.

c. This fragment has part of a turquoise and blue band, as on fragment b. There is a trace of a possible circular or semi-circular hieroglyph. Max. width: 2.6 cm.

d. Fragment showing part of a (*n*) (*~*) hieroglyph in blue. Max. width: 3.0 cm.

All fragments are in Liverpool Museum, accession no. 1973.1.527G.

6. Miscellaneous fragments (Figure 14.7).

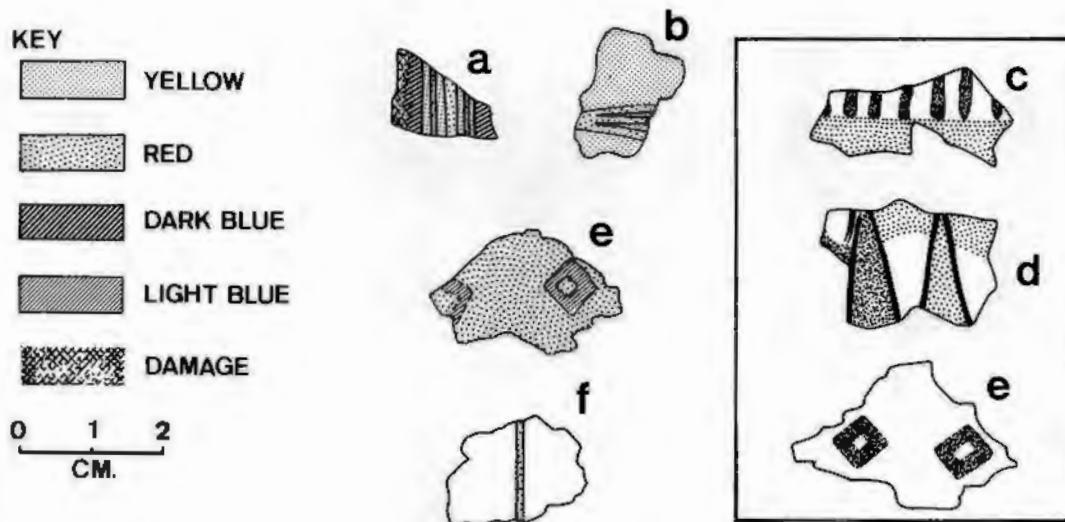


Figure 14.7. Miscellaneous fragments. Actual size. The fragments shown to the right have been redrawn from a black-and-white photograph of the painted facsimiles; the colours are unknown.

F.J. Weatherhead

a. Striped fragment, blue and red on a yellow/brown ground. Design unintelligible.

Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.545R.
Max. width: 2.0 cm.

b. Fragment with brown lines on a yellow ground; design unintelligible.

Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.545R.
Max. width: 2.1 cm.

c. Unintelligible design, only known on photograph of the facsimile, EES 31–32/O.81. Since this is in black-and-white we do not know the colours.

Present location: Unknown.
Max. width: 2.7 cm.

d. Design interpreted as part of a lotus flower; shown on photograph of the facsimile, EES 31–32/O.81. Present are a dark outer sepal and a paler petal from the enclosed flower. At the edge of the fragment, a grey area on the photograph shows the darkened petal tips at the top of the flower.

Present location: Unknown.
Max. width: 2.7 cm.

e. Design only known with certainty on the EES photograph of the facsimile. The copy shows two diamond shapes on a plain background, similar to the diamond shapes on the footstools and cushions on the “Princesses” panel from the King’s House (Petrie 1894: Pl 1.12; Davies 1920: Pl. II). The fragment might, therefore, suggest that the royal figures (nos. 1 and 2) had been seated. Another possibility is that the fragment is part of a cushion at the bottom of a Window of Appearance scene, such as in the tombs of Meryre II and Parennefer at Amarna (*RT* II: Pl. XXXIV; *RT* VI: Pl. IV). A fragment has been found at Liverpool Museum which might be the same fragment as that depicted on the photograph; the two are not actually identical, but then the copy might not be accurate.

Present location: possibly Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.527F.
Max. width: photograph, 3.0 cm, museum, 3.5 cm.

f. Fragment with a white ground crossed by a reddish-brown line. Design unintelligible.

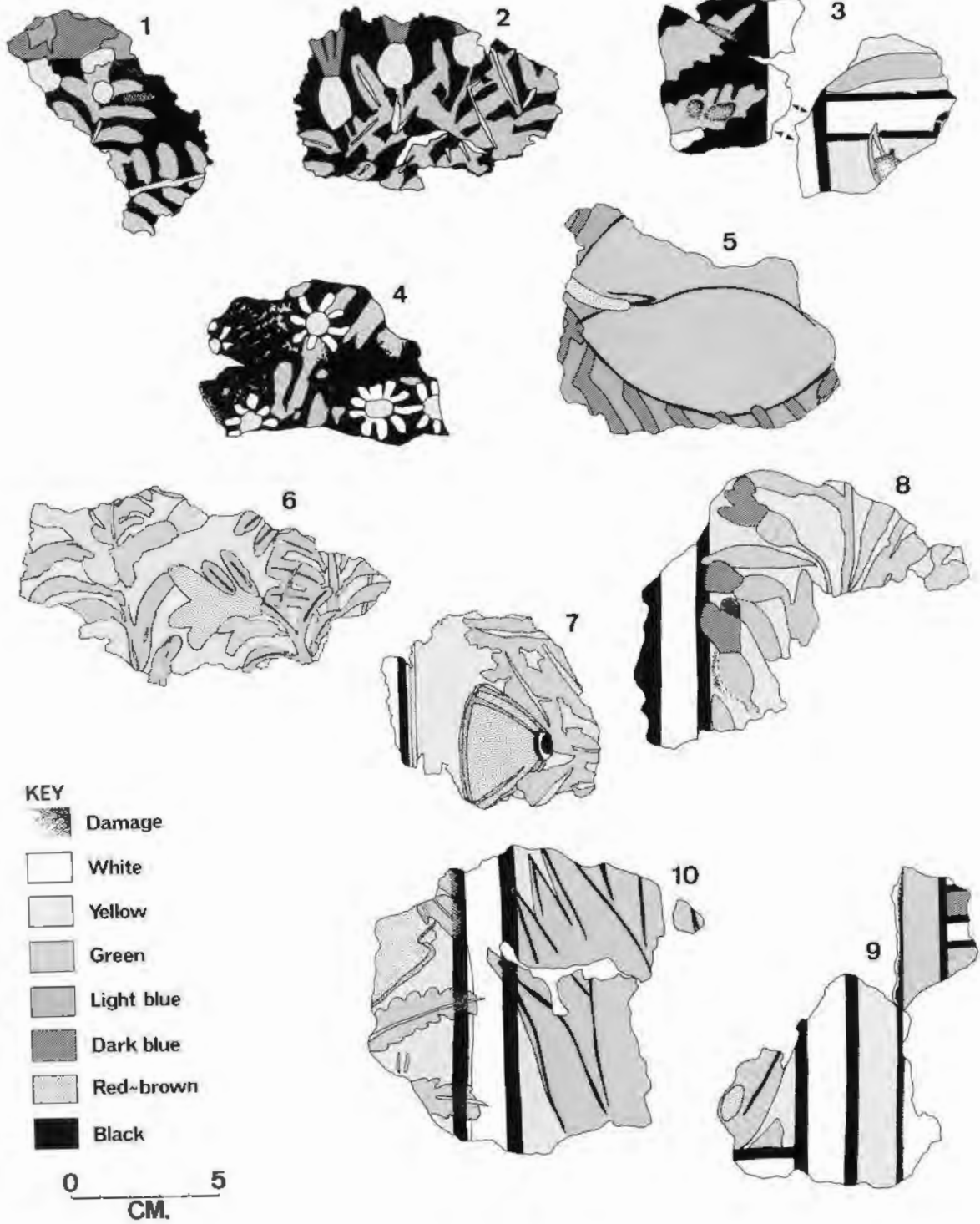
Present location: Liverpool Museum. Accession no. 1973.1.527G.
Max. width : 2.0 cm.

14.4 Group B: pond and garden scene

Thirteen fragments of vegetal design were copied on site, and this drawing photographed (EES 31–32/O.82). As noted above, the fragments have been located in Cairo Museum (Figure 14.8). Although it cannot be certain, since so few fragments survive, it is suggested here that all thirteen fragments originally came from the same design: a pond and garden scene. Taking the interpretation further, it is also put forward that this might have formed part of a representation of the grounds of one of the palaces at Amarna. Such representations, carved in relief, are found in the tombs at Amarna (*RT* IV: Pl. VIII; *RT* VI: Pl. XVII; this volume Figure 14.9.A,B). Regarding the latter example, Pendlebury suggested (*COA* III: 42) that it was a copy of a real painted pavement. Depictions of the palace grounds in the tombs are associated with royal figures. This could be the case at the Bridge, thus bringing together Group A and Group B.

Figure 14.9 shows the conjectured design of a pond surrounded by garden plots, from a study of the fragments. The plants on fragments 8 and 10 appear to be narrower than those on

Wall paintings from the Bridge



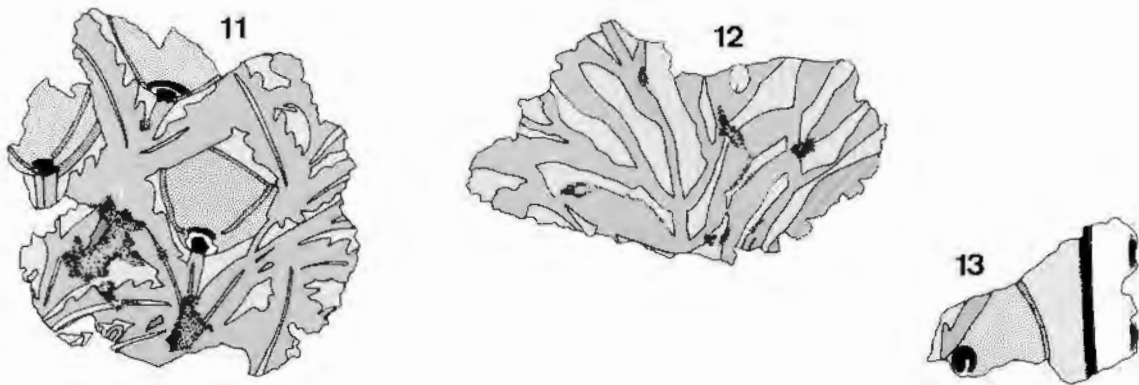


Figure 14.8 (previous page and above). Fragments depicting pond and vegetal designs. Half size.

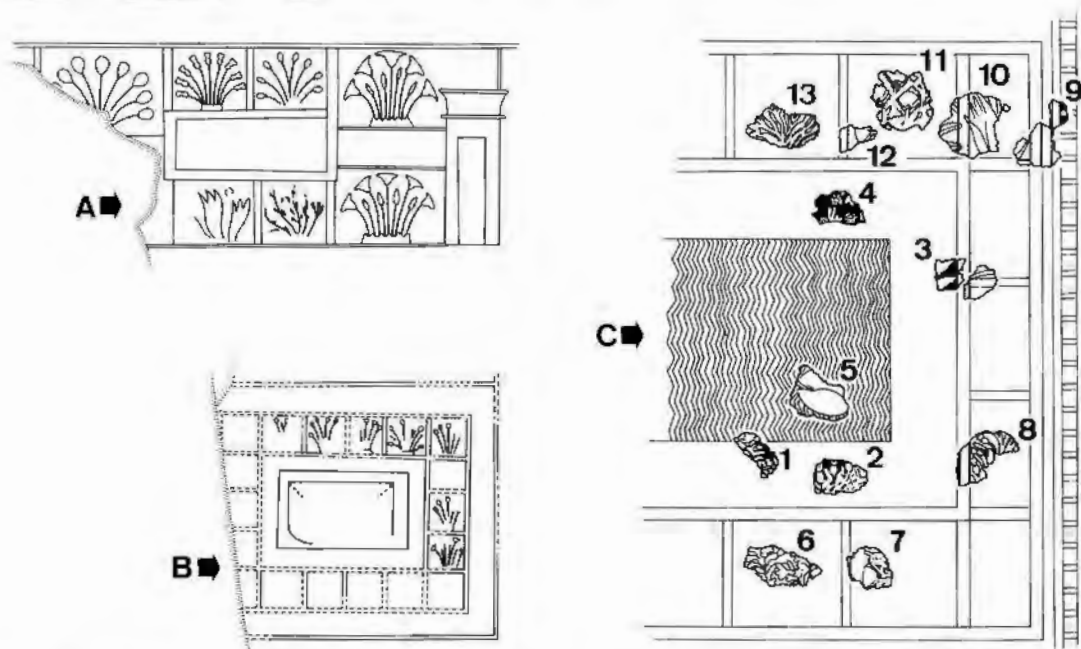


Figure 14.9. Possible depictions of ponds surrounded by flower beds. (A) after *RT* VI: Pl. XVII; (B) after *RT* IV: Pl VII; (C) shows a reconstruction drawing with the possible larger garden design.

fragments 6, 11, and 13; the former are, therefore, thought to be in narrower plots than the latter.

The designs have similarities with floor paintings showing ponds surrounded by plants (but in a wilder setting) at the main pavements in the Great Palace (Petrie 1894: Pl. II–IV; Weatherhead 1992: Figs. 4–5), and at Maru-Aten, where the ponds are real (*COA* I: Pls. XXXVI–XXXIX). At the North Palace and the Great Palace, ponds surrounded by trees and shrubs were probably a real-life feature of the architectural design (Newton 1924: 295, Pl. XXVII; *COA* III: 38, Pls. XV.1, XXXIII.3,4). The significance of the watery landscapes, real and represented, occurring at Amarna have been discussed by the author in another article (Weatherhead 1992: 190–4).

The designs on four of the fragments are from the black banks of a pond. No. 4 shows delicately painted daisy-like flowers; nos. 2 and 4 show other plants with yellow flowers, the yellow mostly degraded. Fragment no. 1 has a trace of light blue from the water above the bank;

fragment no. 5 shows wavy lines of water, and a lotus leaf.

Depictions of stylised ponds or rivers with black banks on either side occur as decorative borders between the dado and the upper register on some of the walls at the North Palace (Frankfort 1929: Pls. 2-4, VIIB-C, XIIC, D, F; Weatherhead unpub. 1). At the North Palace, in the Green Room, the black banks contain similarly delicately painted plants as on the Bridge (ibid. Pls. II-VI). This design has been considered as a border device at the Bridge, separating two sections of a wall, but a less stylised pond and bank connected with garden plots containing plants seems more likely. Fragment no. 3 shows a black bank (containing Pendlebury's "oak-leaf", COA III: 56) connected with a yellow area which is divided by a white strip interpreted as a plot divider; on one side of this is part of a plant.

On the other eight fragments, nos. 6-13, various plants are shown on a yellow background. White bands occur on several of the fragments, interpreted again as dividers between garden plots.² Fragments 7, 11, and 12 show poppies, with characteristic ragged leaves. Fragment 8 is probably a clump of cornflowers, although the base of the flowers is yellow, not the usual turquoise green. On fragment 10 the main plant is a lettuce, the smaller plant part of a poppy. On fragment 13, the plant is unknown. On fragment 6 the plant (which Pendlebury thought looked like an azalea, COA III: 56) is similar to a pomegranate bush, with its distinctive bright red flower; these are still to be found growing in the cultivation at Amarna. Part of a block border is present on fragment 9; this is considered to run vertically since it is next to the vertical base of a plant (lettuce?). It is made up of a green band outlined in black, with other bands in green and blue and white at right angles to it. This common Egyptian design is also found on painted plaster in the North-East Court of the North Palace (Frankfort 1929: Pl. IV, X11B).

Present location: all in Cairo Museum. Nos. 1-8, 10-13, all accession no. JdE 57334; no. 9, accession no. JdE 57334

Max. widths:	1	8.3 cm	8	12.4 cm
	2	9.1 cm	9	12.1 cm
	3	10.4 cm	10	12.0 cm
	4	8.9 cm	11	11.5 cm
	5	10.7 cm	12	6.9 cm
	6	12.5 cm	13	11.9 cm
	7	8.3 cm		

14.5 Conclusion

Among the many fragments of broken plaster found at the Bridge, the excavators were fortunate to find several significant pieces. The two reconstructed faces would appear to be the two most complete representations in painted plaster of Akhenaten and Nefertiti to come from the whole site. These, together with the other collected pieces, are sufficient to indicate that a palace scene had once formed part of the wall decoration of a room over the Bridge. It is much more conjectural to say that a Window of Appearance scene might have been involved, as the evidence is slim, but it is the most reasonable interpretation of some details of the design. It could not be concluded on this basis, however, that a real Window of Appearance used by the royal couple to give rewards to faithful followers had once occurred on the Bridge.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr M. Mohsen of the Cairo Museum and Dr P. Bienkowski of Liverpool Museum who allowed me to examine fragments of painted plaster in their collections; Mr A. Boyce who assisted with the drawings and offered useful advice; and Ms L. Shearman who typed the manuscript. This particular study within the overall project was funded by the G.A. Wainwright Fund, to which I wish to express my thanks.

² Real garden plots, such as existed with whitewashed paving on either side of the sunken garden in the Great Palace, may have inspired this type of design (COA III: Pls. XXXIII.3, 4; XV.1).

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