

Heart Scarab Amulet

MU3286



What is an amulet?

Amulets encompass a diverse range of small objects that were believed to endow their owner with protection through the power of their symbolic meaning. They were made from a variety of materials, most commonly faience, a non-clay ceramic material made of ground sand and quartz. The hieroglyphic words that are translated as “amulet” mean “to protect” or “to guard” and the ancient Egyptians believed that amulets could avert evil and offer protection, good health and good luck. Amulets were worn in daily life, often being attached to bracelets, necklaces and rings. They are also commonly found within the wrappings of mummies to protect the dead on the journey to the afterlife. Heart scarabs similar to MU 3286 are specifically found on the chest of mummies placed directly above the heart. Amulets appear as early as the Predynastic Period (4400-3085 BCE), however it was not until the Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BCE) that they began to represent specific deities. MU 3286 is an excellent example of the type of amulets that are frequently attested in the archaeological record for the New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE) and later periods.