Artist:
Title: Relief of a Queen or Goddess
Geography: Egypt
Period: Ptolemaic Period
Date: 305-30 BC
Culture: Egyptian
Medium: Sandstone
Credit Line: Gift of Dr. and Mrs. L. Franklyn Elliott
Dimensions: 9 1/2 x 16 x 2" (24.1 x 40.6 x 5.1 cm)
Object number: 2005.005.004

Label Text: This relief depicts a queen or goddess wearing a broad collar with one strap of her dress visible below the rows of beads. The echeloned curls of her tripartite wig are surmounted by a vulture headdress, with the bird's head jutting forth from her brow. The vulture headdress became an attribute of royal women in the Old Kingdom, originally linking the queen with Nekhbet, the tutelary goddess of Upper Egypt, although it came to be associated with other goddesses. When worn by royal women, the headdress was likely intended to underscore the divinity of the queenship. Though princesses holding religious office and noblewomen were
portrayed in the vulture cap during the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, its use was again limited to queens and goddesses in the Ptolemaic era. The lower edges of an additional crown, perhaps the Red Crown of Lower Egypt or the Double Crown, are visible atop the vulture headdress. Queen Arsinoe II (279-270 BC) was frequently depicted wearing a combination crown composed of a vulture headdress, Red Crown, ram and cow horns, and solar disk. Both queens and goddesses might appear in the Double Crown, signifying the unity of Upper and Lower Egypt. In this instance, the lack of context or inscription precludes a definitive identification of the woman as royal or divine.

