Evidence
The exhibition-Death Magic is curated by Michael Turner, designed by Louise Ar, and made possible through the generous support of the Friends of the Nicholson Museum.

Embalming is performed by their specialists. Their first step is to insert an iron hook through the nostrils and pull out the brain. Next, an Egyptian and sharpen them, the embalmers cut a slit along the soft part of the body, and remove all the intestines. After this, they stuff the cavity with sweet-smelling spices. Once the stomach has been filled, they set it back up and pickle the body by packing it in natron (a salt mixture). It is then left, for seventy days, after which the embalmers wash the corpse, then wrap it in bandages made from fine linen. This is the most effective method of preparing a corpse.

The Egyptians saw the movement of the ball of dund across the earth as mirroring the movement of the sun across the sky, and they believed that out of each came new life. Ra, as the rising sun, bringer of new life, appears in hieroglyph art as the scarab, Khatpi. He is prominently on top of the head of the coffin of the priest Padiashakheb and on the front of the coffins of Morus (both in display).

Before the introduction of scarab amulets in about 2300 BC, real scarab beetles were buried in jars with the deceased.

Shabtis were symbolic figures who undertook the menial tasks expected of the deceased in the afterlife, where existence was supposed to be eternal and leisurely.

The scarab beetle emerges from its hole in the ground to gather dung, form it into a ball, and roll it across the earth, before disappearing with it back down into the hole. In this ball of dung, it lays its eggs.

During the late New Kingdom, the scarab developed into an emblem of the sun god’s rejuvenation and resurrection. Osiris, the ruler of Egypt, was murdered by his jealous brother, Set. Osiris’s body was either thrown into the Nile or cut into pieces and scattered across Egypt. It was recovered and preserved by Isis and her sister Nephthys, who restored Osiris to an “afflative” in the Underworld where he became its ruler. This is the premise for mumification.

Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, finally defeated Set, bringing peace and stable Dynastic succession to Egypt. In the battle, Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, finally defeated Set, bringing peace and stable Dynastic succession to Egypt. In the battle, Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, finally defeated Set, bringing peace and stable Dynastic succession to Egypt. Horus lost his left eye, tore out by Set. It was found and returned by the goddess Hathor.

The Greeks called Osiris and Isis the rulers of the underworld.

The story of the god Osiris, of his wife (and sister) Isis, and of their son Horus, is one of the most elaborate and fundamental of all Egyptian myths, and of it there are many versions. Osiris, the ruler of Egypt, was murdered by his jealous brother, Set, the god of violence and chaos. His body was either thrown into the Nile or cut into pieces and scattered across Egypt. It was recovered and preserved by Isis and her sister Nephthys, who restored Osiris to an “afflative” in the Underworld where he became its ruler. This is the premise for mumification.

The bronze and stone figurines on display represent Isis, Osiris and Horus as a child.
The Snakes at the Threshold

Coffin of Padishahkhet.

This red granite coffin is the entrance hall to the temple of the cat goddess Bastet, at Bubastis, a once important town in the Nila Delta. It was carved in the 9th century BC.
The face, which appears on both the front and back, is of the cow- eared Hator, the dangerous yet protective goddess associated with female sexuality, love and motherhood.
Hator was also the Mistress of the West, the desert land of the setting sun, who welcomed the dead into the afterlife. She can be seen as a cow, at the edge of the desert, on the mummy coffin of Meruah on display.

On one side of the cap are two cartouches of the Pharaoh Dsorkon II, who ruled Egypt from the Delta between 872 and 837 BC.

In about 450 BC, the Greek traveller Herodotus visited the sanctuary of Bastet, describing it as: "...truly remarkable. Other sanctuaries may be larger, or have cost more to build, but none is more beautiful."

Herodotus, The Histories, i, 137-38. 5th century BC

The offering of food and drink, either to the gods or to the deceased, is a common theme on funerary membranes.

On two stone and one wooden memorial, and on a fragment of a mummy coffin, the deceased offered food and drink to the gods. The gods are Osiris, and his sons, and Re-Horch, a composite of Horus and Re, recognizable as a hawk-headed man with a red sun disk on his head.

On the relief limestone memorial, the deceased, named as Nebosme, sits holding a lotus, or water lily. The flower, which appears on two other memorials on display, symbolises new life and re-generation.

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