Craftsmen at Persepolis carved this block of limestone to imitate a cloth canopy decorated with rosettes and striding lions. Remnants of crenellations on the top of the block suggest that it once belonged to an uppermost row of stones. The fringe along the lower edge, representing knotted cords ending in tassels, was likely chipped away when the stone was later reused in the balustrade of a small stairway east of Darius’ palace (reign 522–465 BC). Preserved on the surface of the stone in three places are double diamond incisions—these are marks or “signatures” of the team of sculptors who carved it.
From Stone Block to Relief

**Model**

This is what is known as a sculptor’s model or trial piece, which scholars believed was used to train sculptors. Limestone relief of a falcon from Egypt, E9802, not on display.

**Starting the carving**

Now one has to start carving the stone. This example here shows an unfinished head from the Khafajeh in Iraq. One can see a few facial features have been carved, such as the eyes, and there are some guiding lines for other parts of the face. A11589, not on display.

**Gridlines**

In this relief, one can still see the gridlines. These gridlines were important for ancient Egyptian artists as it made sure that the composition was carved correctly and stayed in proportion. E24224, on display in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery.

**Finished product**

Here is a finished relief from the Neo-Assyrian palace of Nimrud. A34890, on display in the Edgar and Jannotta Mesopotamia Gallery.

**Sculptors’ Marks**

Sculptors also signed their works, such as this example from Persepolis. A24068, on display in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery.