

Shelf 3: Perfecting the Face

The Holmes Collection has several artifacts that one would find in an upper-class woman's home: instruments for cosmetic preparation and application, containers for unguents (oils) and perfumes, and of course a mirror. In Egypt and the Near East, and later in the Hellenistic Greek and Roman worlds, some upper class men used cosmetics, perhaps in rituals but also as a social custom or fashion. Prostitutes of both sexes would use cosmetics and perfumes as part of their trade, as the Gospel story of Mary Magdalene may illustrate.