



Statuette of a dwarf

On display

Title/Description: Statuette of a dwarf

Born: 2200 c. BC

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Ivory (?)

Measurements: h. 41 mm

Accession Number: 301

Historic Period: Late Dynasty VI (c. 2200 BC), 3rd millennium BC

Production Place: Africa, Egypt

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The achondroplastic (bow-legged) dwarf stands naked with knees flexed and arms hanging at his sides, the back of each hand to the front. Navel and nipples are indicated by drill holes, the left nipple being filled with a plug, possibly of ebony. The close-cropped hair, beard and pubic area are indicated by rows of small drill-holes. The feet are missing; the crown of the head, the area of the right ear, left parietal area and left wrist are damaged.

The dating of this piece must be a matter of opinion. Dwarfs were particularly popular in the Old Kingdom as attendants upon high officers of state. Toys consisting of ivory dancing dwarfs were found in the Middle Kingdom tomb of an infant at Lisht (Hayes, 1953: 222-3). The hard ivory (possibly hippopotamus tusk) of which this statuette is made has rendered the cutting of small details difficult. The carving of nose and lips recalls the style of the Late Old Kingdom rather than that of later periods.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of William Oldman, then Charles Ratton.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury in 1951 from K. J. Hewett.

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
