



Female figure with folded arms

Not on display

Title/Description: Female figure with folded arms

Born: 2700 c. BC - 2400 c. BC

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Marble

Technique: Carving, Incising

Measurements: h. 156 x w. 55 x d. 15 mm

Accession Number: 345

Historic Period: Early Cycladic II (c. 2700-2400 BC), 3rd millennium BC

Production Place: Cyclades, Europe, Greece

Cultural Group: Keros-Syros culture

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This is a small marble figurine which was made in the Cycladic islands of the Aegean sometime in the third millennium BCE. It depicts a naked female figure, with arms in a characteristic folded pose. The figure is very flat, the head arching backward from the line of the back and neck, and the feet pointing forward and markedly down. The legs are at a slight angle to the body which is otherwise flat.

Most of the features of the body are shown by incision, though the grooves between the legs are wider, and the nose is shown in strong relief. The back of the head is marked by a flat area. Although no traces of paint survive, it is possible features such as eyes, hair and tattooing may have been shown using paint, as such features have been observed on other figures. (The incisions are marked by white encrustation which has probably been cleaned off the rest of the surface, giving a misleading impression that the incisions were strongly accented).

Overall the features are highly stylised. In this example the torso is rather foreshortened, with the upper arms shown as much shorter than the lower arms. The arms are not properly distinguished, so that in this case it is not entirely clear which arm is above the other (normally left above right). In very small figures such as this, it sometimes seems less care has been taken over details such as these, but given the stereotypical features of these objects, what was intended would have been clearly understood.

Michael Boyd, April 2022

Further Reading

Broodbank, C., *An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Marthari, M., C. Renfrew & M.J. Boyd, *Early Cycladic Sculpture in Context* (Oxbow Books, 2017).

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1969. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
