



Female figurine

Not on display

Title/Description: Female figurine

Born: 4000 c. BC - 3000 c. BC

Measurements: h. 135 x w. 37 x d. 35 mm

Accession Number: 346

Historic Period: Final Neolithic or Early Bronze Age

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This small, well-formed sculpture was made in the Cyclades in Greece in the fourth or early third millennium BCE. Some have compared this figurine to earlier Neolithic examples in stone or clay mainly because of its well-rounded form. However it is also similar to some examples that prefigure the iconic Cycladic folded-arm form, so it could be from the very end of the Neolithic period or the start of the Early Bronze Age.

The piece is nearly half as broad as it is tall, and it is half as thick as it is broad. The pelvis is almost as broad as the shoulders. The head is elongated and rounded, with nose and mouth indicated in relief on the front, and ears at the side. Eyes are not indicated, but based on other figurines we can postulate that they would have been shown using pigment. 'Rolls' at the back of the head indicate hairstyle or possibly folds of flesh.

The arms are shown across the torso, with a simple line separating them. This is not the classic folded-arm pose, but is not far from it, and is similar to that of other early figurines. Breasts, pubic triangle and vulva are all shown by wide incisions, marking the figure clearly as female. The feet are similar to other 'precanonical' figurines.

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 1961. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
