



Broken female figurine with folded arms

Not on display

Title/Description: Broken female figurine with folded arms

Born: 2700 c. BC - 2400 c. BC

Object Type: Figure, Fragment

Materials: Marble

Technique: Carving, Incising

Measurements: h. 139 x w. 56 x d. 30 mm

Accession Number: 348

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 marble figurine depicting a naked female form. The object has been broken in the past (as seen from the breaks, which have the same brown patination as the rest of the object, so the breaks are not recent), and the head, lower legs and feet are missing. The sculptor has conformed to a particular style, meaning that we can imagine how the missing parts would have been. The head would have been thrown back so as to look upward, broadening from chin to crown, and much less thick than it is wide. Other objects in this collection (such as 339 or 343) can help you imagine how the complete artefact would have looked. Its original size would have been about 220 mm.

The characteristic folded arms give this particular style its name ('folded-arm figurine'). The arms are usually folded left above right, as in this case. All such figurines are broader than they are thick, and some are very flat indeed; this one lies at the opposite end of the spectrum, with sinuous lines and a rounded aspect. The waist is narrow and the pelvis and upper legs are wide. The legs are divided by a deep sawn groove, whereas other features are indicated by incisions. Breasts are shown, but this object lacks a pubic triangle, which is usually shown.

These figurines seem often to have been painted, to add additional features to their austere outlines. Such paint often seems to have indicated tattooing. In this case, however, no traces are preserved.

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 1955. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
