



Statuette of a companion of the dead

On display

Title/Description: Statuette of a companion of the dead

Measurements: h. 57 x w. 38 x d. 21 mm

Accession Number: 629

Historic Period: Dynasty XII (c. 1880 BC)

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1975

This statuette, broken at the waist and arms, represents the concubine of a man of rank, the figure being placed in the tomb to accompany her lord in the next world. It is of blue-green faience with details in black, and shows the upper part of a woman with features summarily modelled. Her close-cropped coiffure, also in black, is pierced with sixteen holes in three rows on each side of the central parting; a further group of four holes lies below the occiput. The holes in the coiffure are relatively large and deep. A number appear to be filled with a substance resembling beeswax, and some at least of these inter-connect by a common channel. It would appear that such holes were for the insertion of hair or other filaments, the group of four at the rear forming the anchorage for a pigtail. Such holes appear in similar statuettes in other collections (e.g. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, nos. 22.1.11.45, 34.1.125; see Hayes, 1953: 220-21).

At the throat is a flower (lotus?) on a necklace which is tied at the nape of the neck with a simple knot. Around the waist at the rear are the remains of tattooing, indicated by blue dots in a lozenge pattern. A similar but more complete figure is in the Louvre (no. E10942; see Noblecourt, 1953: pl. 1).

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

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Peter Sharrer in 1975 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.
