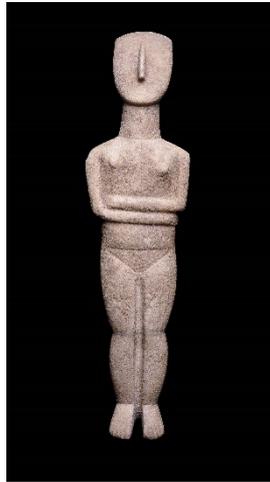


Marble Figurine of a Woman



Cycladic Marble Figure, Greece, 2600-2400BCE, c49cm high, British Museum

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This is a small marble figure 49cm high. The head is slightly elongated with a rounded chin, the top of the head is smoothed off with a gentle curve.

The face of the figure is smoothed off and there are no real facial features (eyes, ears, mouth) apart from a very pronounced nose. The neck is quite thick-set. The curved breasts suggest the figure is of a woman.

The arms are folded across the front of the body with details of fingers carved into the marble. The shoulders are somewhat sloping and have a certain delicacy about the way they have been rendered. One breast appears to be slightly higher on the body than the other. The arms are quite slender, certainly in comparison to the relative thickness of the thighs.

The shape of the legs is well formed on the outside surface of the body but the inside of the legs has been formed by a quite straight line carved into the marble. The legs are not separated as the inner line forming them has not been carved all the way through the marble. A straight line has been carved to form the waistline and sloping lines at the top of each leg combine to form a triangular shape.

To me the overall effect of viewing this figurine is one of serenity.

The British Museum website¹ states that “Early Bronze Age inhabitants of the Cyclades made marble figurines of this type between about 2700 and 2400 BC”. The figurines were “usually female and naked with folded arms. Their heads have no features apart from a sculpted nose”. It also states that facial features painted on and that the crown of the head may also have been painted, maybe to show hairstyle or headdress. Interestingly, according to the website the arms of all the figures are always folded with the right arm under the left.

Part 1: Images of works before 1000BCE

The website continues “The care and time taken to produce these figures, in marble rather than some softer material, and in a well-defined form that was maintained over centuries, suggests that they were important to the people who made and used them. They probably had religious significance and are unlikely to have been dolls or toys. Most come from graves, though they have also been found in settlements. They perhaps had some use in the rituals of the living before accompanying their owners to the grave”.

¹http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/m/marble_figurine_of_a_woman.asp
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