



FEMALE FIGURE, CONCUBINE

Egypt
Middle Kingdom, 2040-1782 BC
Wood with original gesso and polychromy
Height 32.5 cm

Finely carved wooden statue of a nude woman. She stands on a small plinth with legs together and arms by her sides. Her black curly hair is cut short, with a long braid down the middle of the back. Large expressive eyes with black cosmetic lines, highlighted with arched eyebrows, dominate the woman's face. A black triangle marks the pubic area. The woman wears necklaces, a beaded belt and painted bracelets around her ankles.

Statuettes representing naked women were made throughout the history of Pharaonic Egypt, in wood, earthenware, ivory and stone. Traditionally, they were interpreted as the concubines of the deceased, although this designation came into question in the 1940's when it was suggested that they might represent both concubines and wives. More recent studies suggest that they must have had multiple functions, both in funerary and in other magical and sacred contexts. Statuettes of this type have not only been found in burial sites, but also in houses and temples throughout Egypt.

PROVENANCE

Former private collection Henri Smeets, The Netherlands, acquired before 1975, by decent from the above; private collection Dr. P. Hamburg, Germany, acquired in 2016

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E. Godet, *A private collection*, Weert 1975, No 14

LITERATURE

C. Desroches-Noblecourt: 'Concubines du mort' et mères de famille au Moyen Empire, Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (BIFAO) 53, Paris 1953, pp. 7-47

E. Delange: Catalogue des statuettes égyptiennes du Moyen Empire, Musée du Louvre, Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris 1987