Nude female figure
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Period: Iron Age II
Date: ca. 8th–7th century B.C.
Geography: Levant, Lachish (modern Tell ed-Duweir)
Culture: Israelite
Medium: Ceramic
Dimensions: H. 7 1/8 x W. 3 3/8 in. (18.1 x 8.6 cm)
Classification: Ceramics-Sculpture
Credit Line: Gift of Harris D. and H. Dunscombe Colt, 1934
Accession Number: 34.126.53

On view at The Met Fifth Avenue in Gallery 406

This type of pillar figurine is typical of those produced in great numbers in the kingdom of Judah at this time. Tell el-Duweir is ancient Lachish, the major fortified center in Judah that was destroyed by the Assyrian army under Sennacherib (701 B.C.). The city's fate is chronicled in the Bible and represented in wall reliefs from the Assyrian palace at Nineveh. This buxom goddess figurine with pillar base is nude and supports her breasts in her hands. The head is simply rendered with a short, tightly curled caplike hairdo articulated in ridges, and the facial features are mold-made and clearly articulated. This imagery and that on clay plaques with nude female figures probably represents fertility or mother goddesses. The figurines are found in domestic contexts and point to popular cults that coexisted with monothestic Judaism. Outside influences are evident in the religion of ancient Israel and Judah at this time, and Syrian cults focusing on the worship of Asherah may have been an influence. Asherah was the wife of El, head of the Canaanite pantheon, and probably the mother of the gods in Canaanite and later Jewish tradition. Some literary evidence in ancient Israel even speaks of Asherah as the consort of Yahweh himself.

Provenance

1932-33, excavated by James Leslie Starkey on behalf of The Wellcome-Marston Archaeological Research Expedition to the Near East; 1933, ceded to H. Dunscombe Colt in the division of finds as a result of his financial contribution to the expedition; acquired by the Museum in 1934, gift of Harris D. and H. Dunscombe Colt.

References


Timeline of Art History

Timelines
The nude figure is a tradition in Western art, and has been used to express ideals of male and female beauty and other human qualities. It was a central preoccupation of Ancient Greek art, and after a semi-dormant period in the Middle Ages returned to a central position in Western art with the Renaissance. Athletes, dancers, and warriors are depicted to express human energy and life, and nudes in various poses may express basic or complex emotions such as pathos. In one sense, a nude is a work of fine About The Nude Female Figure. More than two hundred full-color photos of women in motion and at rest. Standing. The photographer for The Figure in Motion and The Nude Figure, he lives and works in Venice, Italy. Product Details.