




56

Statuette of Aphrodite

LATE FOURTH-THIRD CENTURIES BC

[Expand All](#)

Object Details

Catalogue Number	56
Inventory Number	71.AD.131 
Typology	Statuette
Location	Sicily
Dimensions	H: 28.7 cm; W: 10.7 cm

Fabric

Light beige in color (Munsell 10 yr 8/3), purified, compact and smooth, with numerous small, reflective inclusions; a layer of white slip; traces of light blue and pink pigments on the drapery, red pigment on the hair, the feet, and the base; and pink color for the complexion. Made with two bivalve molds, the head was applied to the body before firing; there is a large circular vent hole in the back.

Condition

The statuette was partially reconstructed from several fragments. The arms are missing; the head was reattached.

Provenance

– 1969, Leo Mildenburg (Zurich, Switzerland); 1971, Royal Athena Galleries (New York, New York), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1971.

Bibliography

SELECTED WORKS 1971, no. 68.

Description

This half-draped figure has the left leg bent to rest the left foot on a rock; the torso is leaning to the left and the head is turned toward the right. A himation is rolled up on the hips and knotted in front, covering the legs but leaving the groin and the upper body uncovered. The face is oval, the hair is in wavy locks divided into two bands that are gathered on the nape of the neck in a low chignon; the feet are shod in sandals.

This figure adopts the Hellenistic type of the nymph with a bare torso and foot resting on a rocky elevation. This type, quite widespread in Hellenistic statuary, is an amalgamation of various depictions of Aphrodite: the cloak that softly drapes the lower half of the body refers to Aphrodite Anadyomene; the elongated torso is derived from the Aphrodite of Arles; and the general tone of the modeling in the hairstyle and the lean, oval face with its nuanced surfaces is Praxitelean.¹ In its numerous variants this type can be found in various centers throughout the Mediterranean,² and it gained considerable popularity in Magna Graecia and especially in Taranto, where it was reused in the local workshops.³ It is found in Sicily as well, especially in Centuripe, where it developed in many variants with changes in the attributes or the positions of the arms and head, attesting—especially in the Hellenistic period—to the circulation and affinity of Apulian iconographic types among various centers in Sicily, though it is essential to evaluate the specific contexts in order to explain iconography and functions of this type of statuette. Centuripe, in particular, was an important center for the reception and elaboration of outside ideas. This process has yet to be grasped in all its complexity, but in the Early Hellenistic period, the town clearly had direct contact with the art of Magna Graecia, Greece, and Macedonia: a dense web of political relationships, beginning especially in the age of Agathocles, placed Sicily within the larger context of the Hellenistic Mediterranean.⁴ The iconography of the semi-nude woman with her foot resting on a rock was also adopted for the portrayal of female musicians and Nikai, as these were related to marriage rituals and the passage in status from *kore* to *nymphē*.⁵

Notes

1. For the typology of the *nymphē* with a raised foot, see A. Delivorrias, s.v. "Aphrodite," *LIMC* 1 (1981), pp. 2–151, esp. pp. 73–75, nos. 650–52; E. Sichtermann, s.v. "Ninfe," *EAA* 5 (Rome, 1963), p. 502–5, fig. 645; C. M. Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and her Successors: A Historical View of the Female Nude in Greek Art* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1995), pp. 88–89, 97–98. On the

Aphrodite of Arles, see R. Kousser, "Creating the Past: The Vénus de Milo and the Hellenistic Reception of Classical Greece," *AJA* 109, no. 2 (2005), pp. 227–50.

2. From Myrina, see the figure in BESQUES 1963, pl. 107d, dating from the second half of the second century BC and, from Cyrenaica, the statuettes in BESQUES 1992, pls. 2a, b, d, dating from the first half of the third century BC. For a marble statuette of Aphrodite from the eastern Mediterranean, see REEDER 1988, p. 109, no. 32. See also a statue of a *nymphe* or Aphrodite from Rhodes in G. Merker, *The Hellenistic Sculpture of Rhodes*, *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 40 (Göteborg, 1973), pls. 4–5, no. 12.
3. See, for instance, the statuette from a Tarentine tomb, quite similar to this piece in its raised arms, in GRAEPLER 1984, pl. XXVIII, no. 4 (dating from the second century BC).
4. For the female marble statuette from Centuripe, see R. Patanè, "Quattro sculture nel museo civico di Centuripe," pp. 283–94 in R. Gigli, ed., *Megalai Nesoi: Studi dedicati a Giovanni Rizza per il suo ottantesimo compleanno*, *Studi e materiali di archeologia Mediterranea* 2–3 (Catania, 2005), vol. 2. For examples in terracotta, see HIGGINS 1967, pl. 59c, dating from the second century BC; LIBERTINI 1926, pl. XXIII, nos. 2–3; *LA SICILIA GRECA** 1989, no. 371, dating from the second half of the third century BC; SCHÜRMANN 1989, nos. 715–16, pl. 115 from Centuripe (?), dating from the second half of the second century BC; and WINTER 1903, p. 103, nos. 3, 5. Also from Centuripe comes the example in E. Simon, **Minoische und griechische Antiken, Die Sammlung Kiseleff im Martin-von-Wagner-Museum der Universität Würzburg* 2 (Mainz am Rhein, 1989), dating from the second century BC, fig. 112, no. 294. On the contacts and affinities between Sicilian and Apulian coroplastic production, see M. Bell, "Hellenistic Terracottas of Southern Italy and Sicily," in UHLENBROCK 1990, pp. 64–69.
5. For example, BESQUES 1972 pl. 59c, originally found in a funerary deposit from Aegina, along with other statuettes with musical instruments, which can be dated to the third quarter of the third century BC.