




25

Statuette of a Woman

400-250 BC

[Expand All](#)

Object Details

Catalogue Number	25
Inventory Number	78.AD.294.2 
Typology	Statuette
Location	Taranto region
Dimensions	H: 16.8 cm; W: 7.5 cm; Diam (vent hole): 2.3 cm

Fabric

Light beige in color (Munsell 10 yr 8/3), well fired and purified. Polychromy: well preserved on white slip are remains of violet (chiton, edges of the *chlaina*); light blue (himation and pillar), pink (complexion and central sash of the chiton), purple (hair), and black (ivy leaves). The front part was made with a simple mold; the back is flat with a circular vent in the middle.¹

1. Tarentine statuettes of the Tanagra type could also be in full relief, made with bivalve molds

Condition

Intact; worn surface.

Provenance

– by 1978, Bruce McNall (Encino, California), donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1978.

Bibliography

Unpublished.

Description

The standing young female figure bears the weight of her body on her left leg. Her right foot rests on the base of the small pillar with a rectangular cross-section and her right hand rests on a capital. The head is turned slightly to the left, her left arm extends down her side and is covered by the *chlaina* that falls behind her, leaving her shoulders uncovered. She wears a high-waisted chiton that drops in soft folds, emphasizing the pose, which is characterized by a turn of the hip. Her hair, parted into six large clumps, in keeping with the so-called melon coiffure, is gathered into a low bun; on her head is a wreath of ivy leaves, with a circular element in the center. Her oval face has a small, fleshy mouth and a prominent nose; she wears large circular earrings.

This figure belongs to the extensive typology of the female figure leaning against a small pillar, comparable to Tanagra figurines, which developed from Boeotia in the second half of the fourth century BC. This typology became increasingly common also in Magna Graecia,¹ in particular at Taranto,² where it was commonly used for generic portrayals of Aphrodite, maenads, or partially draped reclining female figures. These figures rarely, if ever, provide clear indications that would identify their cult. The compositional scheme of diverging masses, characterized by the contrast between the upper and lower parts of the body, only hinted at in this case, was utilized in the early examples of leaning figures, in which the intention of establishing the figures with unstable equilibrium can be seen. At Taranto, in particular, two types of female statuettes leaning on small pillars were especially widespread. The first is dressed in a high-belted chiton with the head crowned as in this statuette, and it may be depicted also with a tympanon or simply standing.³ The second consists of partially draped or nude female figures identified with Aphrodite; these would continue to be produced until the end of the second century BC.⁴

The statuette finds comparisons among examples that can be dated between the fourth century and the middle of the third century BC. It shows extensive traces of the original polychromy, characterized by strongly contrasting hues, in keeping with the local style.⁵

Notes

1. For dressed figures from Magna Graecia leaning against small pillars, see, from Capua, BESQUES 1986, pl. 54a-c, datable from the second half of the third century BC; BONGHI JOVINO 1990, pl. 3; S. Baroni and V. Casolo, *Terrecotte votive: Catalogo del Museo provinciale campano*, 5: *Piccole figure muliebri panneggiate*, Capua preromana (1990), pls. XVI, no. 1, and pl. XXVII, no. 2, from the end of the fourth century beginning of the third century BC. From the necropolis of Heraclea, see G. Pianu, *La necropoli meridionale di Eraclea* (Rome, 1990) p. 158, pl. LXV, no. 4 (from a tomb dating from the end of the fourth century or beginning of the third century BC); DE JULIIS 1984, no. 7, pp. 429-30 (from a trench tomb in Egnazia dating from the

beginning of the third century BC); DELLA TORRE AND CIAGHI 1980, p. 36, pl. XIII, no. 2 (similar also in terms of pose, type of chiton, and small head wreathed in ivy).

2. For Tanagra statuettes in funerary deposits in Taranto between the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the third century BC, see D. Graepler, "Des Tanagréennes en offrandes funéraires: L'exemple de Tarente," in JEAMMET 2003b, pp. 277–84; for Tanagra in a votive context, see E. Lippolis, "L'usage votif des Tanagréennes en Italie méridionale," in JEAMMET 2003b, pp. 272–76; ABRUZZESE CALABRESE 1996, pp. 194–95, n. 117; see also GRAEPLER 1994.
3. See the comparisons in GRAEPLER 1997, fig. 58, p. 111 (late fourth century BC–early third century BC); BARTOCCINI 1936, fig. 14 (from a tomb in the Via Cesare Battisti in Taranto); DE JULIIS 1984, p. 401; GRAEPLER 1984, pp. 85–109, pl. XXX, no. 3. The type also spread in the central Italic milieu with an array of variants until the Late Hellenistic period: see L. Gatti Lo Guzzo, *Il deposito votivo dall'Esquilino detto di Minerva Medica* (Florence, 1978), pp. 163–66, pl. VII, and pp. 37–38, 156–58; and P. Pensabene, M. A. Rizzo, M. Roghi, and E. Talamo, *Terrecotte votive del Tevere*, Studi miscellanei 25 (Rome, 1980), pl. XXVI, fig. 89. For the type of the head wreathed in ivy with minute facial features, diffused throughout the Mediterranean, see also BELL 1981, no. 594, pl. 103, dating from the end of the fourth century BC.
4. For the type of seminude figure leaning against a small column, see GRAEPLER 1996, no. 188 (beginning of the third century BC); GRAEPLER 1997, figs. 59–60, 105–6, 143–44, 208–9.
5. For the use of polychromy, see JEAMMET ET AL. 2007; there are also comparisons in GRAEPLER 1996, p. 233, no. 187; and J. Chesterman, *Classical Terracotta Figures* (London, 1974), no. 79, p. 69.