


57

Statuette of Eros

150-125 BC

[Expand All](#)

Object Details

Catalogue Number	57
Inventory Number	71.AD.130 
Typology	Statuette
Location	Sicily
Dimensions	H: 22.5 cm; W: 8 cm

Fabric

Pinkish yellow color (Munsell 7.5 yr 6/8), friable and purified, with extensive traces of polychromy over a thick layer of white slip: red ocher (hair and attachments of the wings), calcite (drapery), and Egyptian blue (himation). The pinkish pigment on areas of the chest and pelvis has been identified as shell white, likely a modern pigment applied to cover damaged areas. The statuette was made from two molds, for the front and back; the legs are solid. The head, arms, legs, and wings were applied before firing.

Condition

Missing arms and lower legs. Surfaces are abraded, and the polychromy is faded at many points.

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. 37.

Description

The young nude Eros is standing with his weight on the left leg and the right leg drawn slightly back, determining the flexed pose of the torso. A roll of fabric is draped around the hips, dangling over his thighs, with two long ends arranged on either side at the rear. The head is turned slightly to the left; the hair is parted over the forehead and, forming a bow at the top, dangles softly in puffy locks on either side of the neck. The face is oval, with pronounced cheekbones; the mouth is small; the facial features are nuanced. The left arm was raised, and the wings (now missing) must have been spread.

This youthful winged Eros with drapery rolled below his hips harks back to an iconography widely documented in Hellenistic coroplastic art.¹ It finds points of contact with other examples, especially those from Taranto and Centuripe that can be dated to the third quarter of the second century BC, for the most part belonging to funerary deposits of children.² The elongated torso with its soft forms echoes the more stereotypical creations of the Praxitelean tradition and resembles the stylistic Erotes that were mass-produced in Myrina, among other places. In the rendering of these figures, we see the same technical methods that characterize the figures of the second century BC: a generally summary modeling accompanied by a fairly rough coloring and inadequate firing. The expressive rendering of the figure is usually focused on the movement of the arms.³

Appendix

The statuette's pigments were examined using PLM. A sample of blue from the rope of drapery at the front of the figure was identified as Egyptian blue. The white on the drapery was identified as containing calcite, and X-ray diffraction (XRD) confirmed this pigment as calcite. The dark red on the hair was identified as red ocher. The pinkish-gray paint seen on many areas of the chest and at the pelvis was identified as possibly a shell white, used in ancient times but much more commonly in inexpensive modern paints. It had a very different appearance under PLM than the original white pigment. UV-visible fluorescence examination shows the overpainted areas clearly. Samples were taken from both the lower half of the figure and from the head. It is assumed that the piece is whole with some damage having occurred in the past. The legs were most probably broken off and reattached, as was the rope of the drapery. The chest suffered some damage and was repaired and painted over

with modern pigments. An arm had probably been reattached to the proper left side of the figure at some point, as adhesive residue is found there. That arm is now missing, as is the right arm.

Notes

1. For the typology of the youthful Eros, see HERMARY AND CASSIMATIS 1986, pp. 939–42.
2. See, for comparison, from Centuripe: LIBERTINI 1926, pl. XXIV, no. 1; KEKULÉ 1884, pls. XLVIII, no. 2; from Taranto: GRAEPLER 1996, p. 246, no. 197 (second and third quarters of the second century B.C.); C. Drago, “Rinvenimenti e scavi: 24 agosto–17 novembre 1934 (Taranto),” *NSc*, ser. 7, no. 1 (1940), pp. 314–54, fig. 6 from a tomb in the Contrada Corvisea.
3. GRAEPLER 1996, p. 237; see the Eros with a wreath in S. Besques, “Deux statuettes de Myrina au Musée Jacquemart-André,” in M. Schmidt, ed., *Kanon: Festschrift Ernst Berger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Basel, 1988), pp. 202–4, dating from the second half of the second century BC. See also the youthful Eros with an elongated torso and plump, delicate facial features in BREITENSTEIN 1941, pl. 88, no. 732.