

Female Figure
Cycladic, ca. 2500–2400 B.C.
White marble with traces of polychrome

Purchase, Frank C. Atherton Memorial Fund, 1976
(4386.1)

This female figurine is from a Bronze Age (ca. 2900–2200 B.C.) cemetery in the Cyclades, a group of islands in the Aegean Sea located between the mainland of Greece and Turkey. It is a late example belonging to a class of female, folded-arm figures called the Spedos Variety, named after an important cemetery site on the Cycladic island of Naxos. Though unusual in its largeness, this work shows handling characteristic of the figures in this category. Its lyre-shaped head and torso are flat with the exception of the nose and subtle

modeling and incised lines delineating the various limbs and sections of the body. The face retains hints of pigment. Notice the double rows of red dots across both cheeks, the nose, and forehead. Faint traces of what may have been blue paint appear in the region of the eyes. Also interesting is the single curled lock of hair which was painted on the right side of the head. It seems that the sidelock only appears on the Spedos Variety of female folded-arm figures.



Cycladic Female Figure (4386.1)
Bank C. Atherton Memorial Fund Purchase, 1976
White marble with painted decoration

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Entrance to Sp. Courtyard
Cycladic Islands
South Aegean Sea
3rd Millenium BC

Artist: Unknown

Subject: Female Figure - assumed to be an idol or representation of the deceased in funerary rites since most of these Cycladic figures were found lying in graves (the feet are non-supportive). ^{No known}

Medium and Technique: Hard white marble. Technique seems to have been standardized, with human proportions approximated and anatomical parts simplified and stylized. Only the size of the figure varied. A rectangular slab of marble was trimmed to outline of a human figure with arms folded, legs together and feet slightly apart. The head was erect and usually tilted backward with the top thinned almost to a sharp edge. The division between the legs was done with a sharp wedge-shaped tool cutting a groove in the stone or sometimes leaving an open space between the legs. The nose was the only feature of the face that was portrayed. This was done by rubbing a flat on two sides of the face, thus leaving the unrubbed nose protruding. Rubbing was the only process used to finish off the statue.

Cycladic figures as we know them are thought to have evolved from a very simple type found in early settlements of Troy and were probably Anatolian in origin. They may have slightly influenced the Minoans of Crete and later archaic Greek artists. These Cycladic people produced a pre-Mycenean culture that was the first to practice navigation and overseas trade in the Mediterranean region on a large scale.

Style: Classic "Developed" Style, Early Bronze Age. This statue fits in the conventional form described above. The body is stylized, slightly rounded, with incised lines defining the chin, neck, fingers, pelvic area, knees and ankles. The arms folded over the stomach as in burial are a little more delineated. Space between the legs is marked by a difference in depth from no more than an incised line at the pubic region to an open space from the ankles down. The long head is tilted backwards and the top tapers to a wedge shape. Traces of red pigment in "tattoo" pattern (short vertical strokes) are across the forehead and in curved subtle rows of dots on the cheeks. There are faint indications that eyes and eyebrows were outlined in blue or black. This painting of the surface is characteristic of the "Developed" style.

Instructional Aids: Note the marvelous curves of the figure as seen from the side, with one from the top of the head to the buttocks, another down to the ankles, and a slighter one the bottom of the feet. Certainly such a figure could not stand. Do you think it is supposed to be on tip toe?

Female Figure

Cycladic, 2500–2400 B.C.

Marble with traces of polychrome

Purchase, Frank C. Atherton Memorial Fund, 1976
(4386.1)

This female figure is from a Bronze Age (c. 2900-2200 B.C.) cemetery in the Cyclades, a group of islands in the Aegean Sea located between the mainland of Greece and Turkey. Though unusual in its large scale, it is a late example of the Spedos Variety, a class of female figures with folded arms, so named for the locale from which they were excavated. The near-perfect geometry and extreme flatness of the head and torso are balanced by the subtle modeling and incised lines that define the various limbs and sections of the body. Originally polychrome, the face retains faint traces of pigment: double rows of red dots cross the cheeks, nose, and forehead, and bluish hues are perceptible in the region of the eyes.